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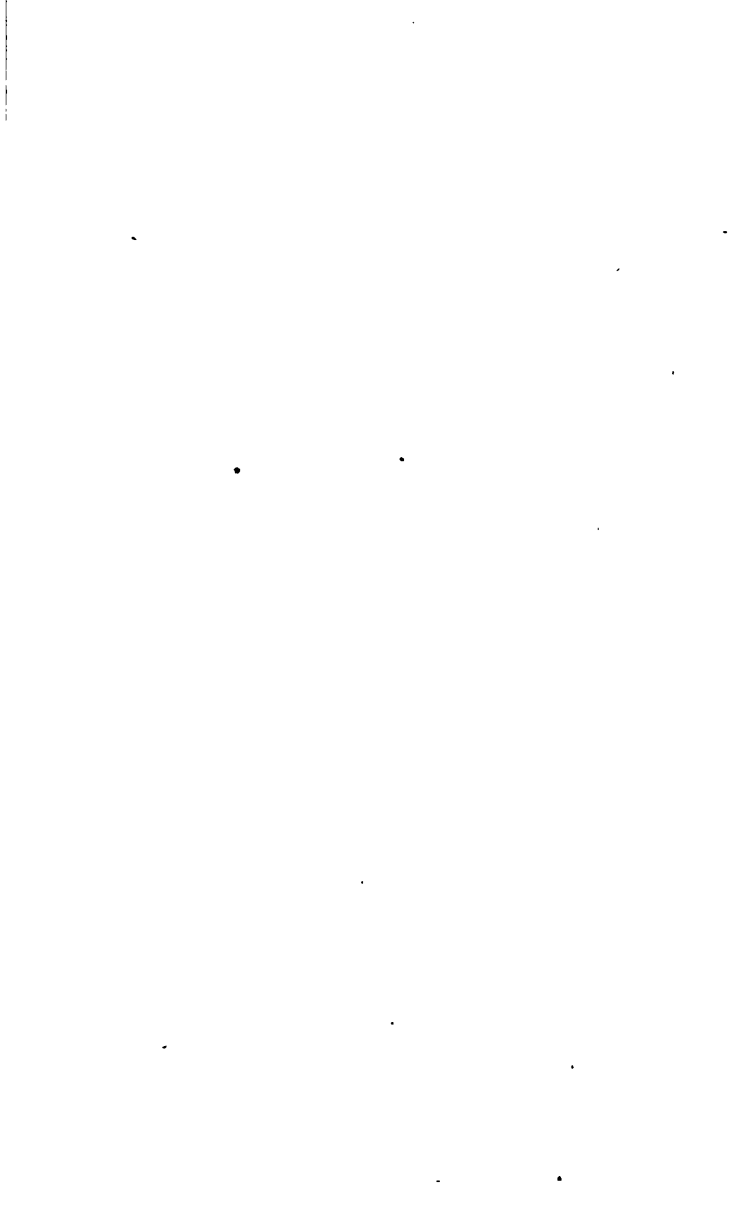






















**I Promessi Sposi.**

**THE BETROTHED.**

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**I Promessi Sposi.**

**THE BETROTHED.**

BY

**ALESSANDRO MANZONI.**



**RENZO.**

**A NEW TRANSLATION.**

**VOL. II.**

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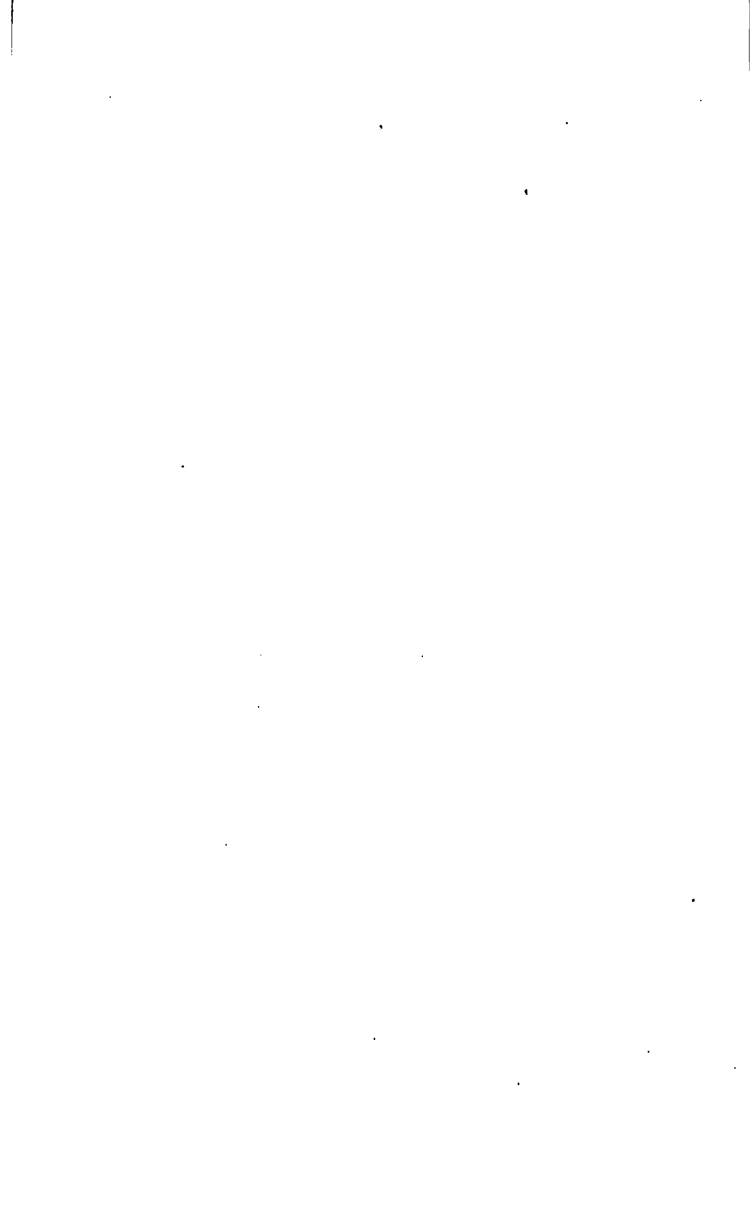
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## CHAPTER XIX.

**I**F a weed be discovered in a badly cultivated field, a fine root of sorrel, for example, and the spectator wish to ascertain with certainty whether it has sprung up from seed, either ripened in the field itself, or wafted thither by the wind, or dropped there by a bird in its flight, let him think as he will about it, he will never come to a satisfactory conclusion. For the same reason we are unable to decide whether the resolution formed by the Count of making use of the Father-provincial to cut in two, as the best and easiest method, this intricate knot, arose from his own unassisted imagination, or from the suggestions of Attilio. Certain it is, that Attilio had not thrown out the hint unintentionally; and however naturally he might expect that the jealous haughtiness of his noble relative would recoil at so open an insinuation, he was determined at any rate to make the idea of such a resource flash before his eyes, and let him know the course which he desired he should pursue.



On the other hand, the plan was so exactly consonant with his uncle's disposition, and so naturally marked out by circumstances, that one might safely venture the assertion, that he had thought of, and embraced it, without the suggestion of any one. It was a most essential point towards the reputation of power which he had so much at heart, that one of his name, a nephew of his, should not be worsted in a dispute of such notoriety. The satisfaction that his nephew would take for himself, would have been a remedy worse than the disease, a foundation for future troubles, which it was necessary to overthrow at any cost, and without loss of time. Command him at once to quit his palace, and he would not obey; and, even should he submit, it would be a surrendering of the contest, a submission of their house to the superiority of a convent. Commands, legal force, or any terrors of that nature, were of no value against an adversary of such a character as Father Cristoforo: the regular and secular clergy were entirely exempt, not only in their persons, but in their places of abode, from all lay-jurisdiction (as must have been observed even by one who has read no other story than the one before him); otherwise they would often have fared very badly. All that could be attempted against such a rival was his removal, and the only means for obtaining this was the Father-provincial, at whose pleasure Father Cristoforo was either stationary, or on the move.

Between this Father-provincial and the Count of the privy-council there existed an acquaintanceship of long standing: they seldom saw each other, but whenever they met, it was with great demonstrations of friendship, and reiterated offers of service. It is sometimes easier to transact business advantageously with a person who presides over many individuals than with only one of those same individuals, who sees but his own motives, feels but his own passions, seeks only his own ends;



while the former instantly perceives a hundred relations, contingencies, and interests, a hundred objects to secure or avoid, and can, therefore, be taken on a hundred different sides.

When all had been well arranged in his mind, the Count one day invited the Father-provincial to dinner, to meet a circle of guests selected with superlative judgment:—an assemblage of men of the highest rank, whose family alone bore a lofty title, and who by their carriage, by a certain native boldness, by a lordly air of disdain, and by talking of great things in familiar terms, succeeded, even without intending it, in impressing, and, on every occasion, keeping up, the idea of their superiority and power; together with a few clients bound to the house by an hereditary devotion, and to its head by the servitude of a whole life; who, beginning with the soup to say “yes,” with their lips, their eyes, their ears, their head, their whole body, and their whole heart, had made a man, by desert-time, almost forget how to say “no.”

At table, the noble host quickly turned the conversation upon Madrid. There are many ways and means of accomplishing one's object, and he tried all. He spoke of the court, the Count-duke, the ministers, and the governor's family; of the bull-baits, which he could accurately describe, having been a spectator from a very advantageous post; and of the Escorial, of which he could give a minute account, because one of the Count-duke's pages had conducted him through every nook and corner of it. For some time the company continued like an audience, attentive to him alone; but, by degrees, they divided into small groups of talkers, and he then proceeded to relate further anecdotes of the great things he had seen, as in confidence, to the Father-provincial, who was seated near him, and who suffered him to talk on without interruption. But at a certain



point he gave a turn to the conversation, and, leaving Madrid, proceeded from court to court, and from dignitary to dignitary, till he had brought up on the tapis Cardinal Barberini, a Capuchin, and brother to the then reigning Pope, Urban VIII. The Count was at last obliged to cease talking for a while, and be content to listen, and remember that, after all, there were some people in the world who were not born to live and act only for him. Shortly after leaving the table, he requested the Father-provincial to step with him into another apartment.

Two men of authority, age, and consummate experience, now found themselves standing opposite to each other. The noble lord requested the reverend father to take a seat, and, placing himself at his side, began as follows. "Considering the friendship that exists between us, I thought I might venture to speak a word to your Reverence on a matter of mutual interest, which it would be better to settle between ourselves, without taking any other courses, which might . . . But, without further preface, I will candidly tell you to what I allude, and I doubt not you will immediately agree with me. Tell me : in your convent of Pescarenico there is a certain Father Cristoforo of . . . ?"

The Provincial bowed assent.

"Your Paternity will be good enough then, frankly, like a friend, to tell me . . . this person . . . this Father . . . I don't know him personally ; I am acquainted with several Capuchin fathers, zealous, prudent, humble men, who are worth their weight in gold : I have been a friend to the order from my boyhood . . . . But in every rather numerous family . . . there is always some individual, some wild . . . . And this Father Cristoforo, I know by several occurrences that he is a person . . . . rather inclined to disputes . . . . who has not all the prudence, all the circumspection . . . . I dare say he



has more than once given your Paternity some anxiety."

—I understand; this is a specimen,—thought the Provincial in the meantime.—It is my fault; I knew that that blessed Cristoforo was fitter to go about from pulpit to pulpit, than to be set down for six months in one place, specially in a country convent.—

"Oh!" said he aloud: "I am really very sorry to hear that your Highness entertains such an opinion of Father Cristoforo; for, as far as I know, he is a most exemplary monk in the convent, and is held in much esteem also in the neighbourhood."

"I understand perfectly; your Reverence ought . . . However, as a sincere friend, I wish to inform you of a thing which it is important for you to know; and even if you are already acquainted with it, I think, without exceeding my duty, I should caution you against the (I only say) possible consequences. Do you know that this Father Cristoforo has taken under his protection a man of that country, a man . . . of whom your Paternity has doubtless heard mention; him who escaped in such disgrace from the hands of justice, after having done things on that terrible day of St. Martin . . . things . . . Lorenzo Tramaglino?"

—Alas!—thought the Provincial, as he replied: "This particular is quite new to me; but your Highness is sufficiently aware that it is a part of our office to seek those who have gone astray, to recall them . . ."

"Yes, yes; but intercourse with offenders of a certain kind! . . . is rather a dangerous thing—a very delicate affair . . ." And here, instead of puffing out his cheeks and panting, he compressed his lips, and drew in as much air as he was accustomed to send forth with such profound importance. He then resumed: "I thought it as well to give you this hint, because if ever his Excellency . . . He may have had some business at



Rome . . . . I don't know, though . . . and there might come to you from Rome . . . ."

"I am much obliged to your Lordship for this information, but I feel confident, that if they would make inquiries on this subject, they would find that Father Cristoforo has had no intercourse with the person you mention, unless it be to try and set him right again. I know Father Cristoforo well."

"You know, probably, already, better than I do, what kind of a man he was as a layman, and the life he led in his youth."

"It is one of the glories of our habit, Signor Count, that a man who has given ever so much occasion in the world for men to talk about him, becomes a different person when he has assumed this dress. And ever since Father Cristoforo has worn the habit. . . ."

"I would gladly believe it, I assure you—I would gladly believe it; but sometimes . . . as the proverb says . . . . 'It is not the cowl that makes the friar.'"

The proverb was not exactly to the purpose, but the Count had cited it instead of another, which had crossed his mind; "The wolf changes its skin, but not its nature."

"I have facts," continued he; "I have positive proofs. . . ."

"If you know for certain," interrupted the Provincial, "that this friar has been guilty of any fault, (and we are all liable to err,) you will do me a favour to inform me of it. I am his superior, though unworthily; but it is, therefore, my duty to correct and reprove."

"I will tell you; together with the displeasing circumstance of the favour this Father displays towards the person I have mentioned; there is another grievous thing, which may . . . . But we will settle all this between ourselves at once. This same Father Cristoforo has begun a quarrel with my nephew, Don Rodrigo \* \* \* \*"



"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it!—very sorry indeed!"

"My nephew is young, and hot-tempered; he feels what he is, and is not accustomed to be provoked. . . ."

"It shall be my business to make every inquiry on the subject. As I have often told your Lordship, and as you must know, with your great experience in the world, and your noble judgment, far better than I, we are all human, and liable to err . . . some one way, some another; and if our Father Cristoforo has failed . . ."

"Your Reverence must perceive that these are matters, as I said, which had better be settled between ourselves, and remain buried with us—things which, if much meddled with, will only be made worse. You know how it often happens; these strifes and disputes frequently originate from a mere bagatelle, and become more and more serious as they are suffered to proceed. It is better to strike at the root before they grow to a head, or become the causes of a hundred other contentions. Suppress it, and cut it short, most reverend Father; suppress, and cut it short. My nephew is young; the monk, from what I hear, has still all the spirit—all the . . . inclinations of a young man; and it belongs to us who have some years on our shoulders—(too many, are there not, most reverend Father?) it belongs to us, I say, to have judgment for the young, and try to remedy their errors. Fortunately we are still in good time: the matter has made no stir; it is still a case of a good *principiis obsta*. Let us remove the straw from the flame. A man who has not done well, or who may be a cause of some trouble in one place, sometimes gets on surprisingly in another. Your Paternity, doubtless, knows where to find a convenient post for this friar. This will also meet the other circumstance of his having, perhaps, fallen under the suspicions of one . . . who would be very glad that he should be



removed; and thus, by placing him at a little distance, we shall kill two birds with one stone; all will be quietly settled, or rather, there will be no harm done."

The Father-provincial had expected this conclusion from the beginning of the interview. — Ay, ay! — thought he to himself;—I see well enough what you would bring me to. It's the usual way; if a poor friar has an encounter with you, or with any one of you, or gives you any offence, right or wrong, the superior must make him march immediately.—

When the Count was at last silent, and had puffed forth a long-drawn breath, which was equivalent to a full stop: "I understand very well," said the Provincial, "what your noble Lordship would say; but before taking a step . . . ."

"It is a step, and it is not a step, most reverend Father. It is a natural thing enough—a very common occurrence; and if it does not come to this, and quickly too, I foresee a mountain of disorders—an Iliad of woes. A mistake . . . . my nephew, I do not believe . . . . I am here, for this . . . . But, at the point at which matters have now arrived, if we do not put a stop to it between ourselves, without loss of time, by one decided blow, it is not possible that it should remain a secret . . . . and then, it is not only my nephew . . . . we raise a hornet's nest, most reverend Father. You know, we are a powerful family—we have adherents . . . ."

"Plainly enough . . . ."

"You understand me: they are all persons who have some blood in their veins, and who . . . . count as somebody in the world. Their honour will come in; it will become a common affair; and then . . . . even one who is a friend to peace. . . . It will be a great grief to me to be obliged . . . . to find myself . . . . I, who have always had so much kind feeling towards the Capuchin Fathers! You reverend Fathers, to continue to do



good, as you have hitherto done, with so much edification among the people, stand in need of peace, should be free from strifes, and in harmony with those who . . . . And, besides, you have friends in the world . . . . and these affairs of honour, if they go any length, extend themselves, branch out on every side, and draw in . . . . half the world. I am in a situation which obliges me to maintain a certain dignity . . . . His Excellency . . . . my noble colleagues . . . . it becomes quite a party matter . . . . particularly with that other circumstance . . . . You know how these things go."

"Certainly," said the Father-provincial, "Father Cristoforo is a preacher; and I had already some thoughts . . . . I have just been asked . . . . But at this juncture, and under the present circumstances, it might look like a punishment; and a punishment before having fully ascertained . . . ."

"Pshaw! punishment, pshaw!—merely a prudentia arrangement—a convenient resource for preventing evils which might ensue . . . . I have explained myself."

"Between the Signor Count and me things stand in this light, I am aware; but as your Lordship has related the circumstances, it is impossible, I should say, but that something is known in the country around. There are everywhere firebrands, mischief-makers, or, at least, malicious priors, who take a mad delight in seeing the nobility and the religious orders at variance; they observe it immediately, report it, and enlarge upon it . . . . Everybody has his dignity to maintain; and I also, as Superior, (though unworthily,) have an express duty . . . . The honour of the habit . . . . is not my private concern . . . . it is a deposit of which . . . . Your noble nephew, since he is so high-spirited as your Lordship describes him, might take it as a satisfaction offered to him, and . . . . I do not say boast of it, and triumph over him, but . . . ."



"Is your Paternity joking with me? My nephew is a gentleman of some consideration in the world . . . that is, according to his rank and the claims he has; but in my presence he is a mere boy, and will do neither more nor less than I bid him. I will go further, and tell you that my nephew shall know nothing about it. Why need we give any account of what we do? It is all transacted between ourselves, as old friends, and never need come to light. Don't give yourself a thought about this. I ought to be accustomed to be silent." And he heaved a deep sigh. "As to gossips," resumed he, "what do you suppose they can say? The departure of a monk to preach somewhere else, is nothing so very uncommon! And then, we who see . . . we who foresee . . . we who ought . . . we need not give ourselves any concern about gossipings."

"At any rate, it would be well to try and prevent them on this occasion, by your noble nephew's making some demonstration, giving some open proof of friendship and deference . . . not for our sakes, as individuals, but for the sake of the habit . . ."

"Certainly, certainly, this is but fair. . . . However, there is no need of it; I know that the Capuchins are always received as they ought to be by my nephew. He does so from inclination; it is quite the disposition of the family: and besides, he knows it is gratifying to me. In this instance, however, . . . something more marked . . . is only right. Leave me to settle it, most reverend Father; I will order my nephew . . . that is, I must cautiously suggest it to him, lest he should suspect what has passed between us. It would not do, you know, to lay a plaister where there is no wound. And as to what we have determined upon, the quicker the better. If you can find some post at a little distance . . . to obviate every occasion . . ."

"I have just been asked for a preacher at Rimini;



and perhaps, even without any other reason, I should have thought of . . . .”

“ Exactly *apropos*, exactly *apropos*. And when . . . ?”

“ Since the thing must be done, it had better be done at once.”

“ Directly, directly, most reverend Father ; better to-day than to-morrow. And,” continued he, as he rose from his seat, “ if I can do anything, I or my friends, for our worthy Capuchin Fathers . . . .”

“ We know, by experience, the kindness of your house,” said the Father-provincial, also rising, and advancing towards the door, behind his vanquisher.

“ We have extinguished a spark,” said the Count, walking slowly forward ; “ a spark, most reverend Father, which might have been fanned into a wide-spreading and dangerous flame. Between friends, two or three words will often settle great things.”

On reaching the other apartment, he threw open the door, and insisted upon the Father’s first entering : then following him in, they mingled with the rest of the company.

This nobleman employed a studied politeness, great dexterity, and fine words, to accomplish his designs ; and they produced corresponding effects. In fact, he succeeded, by the conversation we have related, in making Father Cristoforo go, on foot, from Pescarenico to Rimini, which is a very tolerable distance.

One evening, a Capuchin arrived at Pescarenico, from Milan, with a despatch to the Father-guardian. It contained an order for Father Cristoforo to repair at once to Rimini, where he was appointed to preach the course of Lent Sermons. The letter to the guardian contained instructions to insinuate to the said friar, that he must give up all thoughts of any business he might have in hand in the neighbourhood he was about to leave, and was not to keep up any correspondence there : the bearer would be his companion by the way. The guardian



said nothing that evening; but next morning he summoned Father Cristoforo, showed him the command, bade him take his wallet, staff, maniple, and girdle, and, with the Father whom he presented to him as a companion, immediately set off on his journey.

What a blow this would be to the poor friar, the reader must imagine. Renzo, Lucia, Agnese, instantly rushed into his mind; and he exclaimed, so to say, to himself:—Oh my God! what will these poor creatures do, when I am no longer here!—But instantly raising his eyes to heaven, he reproached himself for want of faith, and for having supposed that he was necessary in anything. He crossed his hands on his breast, in token of obedience, and bowed his head before the guardian, who, taking him aside, told him the rest of the message, adding a few words of advice, and some sensible precepts. Father Cristoforo then went into his cell, took his basket, and placed therein his breviary, his sermons, and the bread of forgiveness, bound round his waist a leathern girdle, took leave of his brethren whom he found in the convent, went to request the guardian's blessing, and then, with his companion, took the route which had been prescribed for him.

We have said that Don Rodrigo, more than ever resolved to accomplish his praiseworthy undertaking, had determined to seek the assistance of a very formidable character. Of this personage we can give neither the name, surname, nor title, nor can we even venture a conjecture on any one of them; which is the more remarkable, as we find mention of him in more than one published book of those times. That it is the same personage, the identity of facts leaves no room for doubt; but everywhere a studious endeavour may be traced to conceal his name, as if the mention of it would have ignited the pen, and scorched the writer's hand. Francesco Rivola, in his life of the Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, speaking of this person, says: "A nobleman, as



powerful by wealth as illustrious by birth," and nothing more. Giuseppe Ripamonti, who, in the fifth book of the fifth decade of his *Storia Patria*, makes more exclusive mention of him, describes him as "one," "this person," "that person," "this man," "that personage." "I will relate," says he, in his elegant Latin, which we translate as follows, — "the case of one, who, being among the first of the great men of the city, took up his residence in the country; where, securing himself by the force of crime, he set at nought justice and judges, all magisterial, and even all sovereign power. Situated on the very confines of the state, he led an independent life; a harbourer of outlaws, an outlaw at one time himself, and then safely returned . . ." We will extract, in the sequel, some other passages from this writer, which will serve to confirm and elucidate the account of our anonymous author, with whom we are travelling onward.

To do what was forbidden by the public laws, or rendered difficult by an opposing power; to be the arbiter, the judge in other people's affairs, without further interest in them than the love of command; to be feared by all, and to have the upper hand among those who were accustomed to hold the same station over others: such had ever been the principal objects and desires of this man. From his youth he had always had a mingled feeling of contempt and impatient envy at the sight or report of the power, rencounters, strifes, or oppressive tyranny of others. Young, and living in a city, he omitted no opportunity, nay, even sought for them, of setting himself up against the most renowned of this profession, either entirely to subdue them, to struggle with them, and keep them in awe, or to induce them to solicit his friendship. Superior to most in riches and retinue, and, perhaps, to all in presumption and intrepidity, he compelled many to retire from competition; some he treated with haughtiness or contempt,



some he took as friends; not, however, on an equality with himself, but, as alone would satisfy his proud and arrogant mind, as subordinate friends, who would be content to acknowledge their inferiority, and use their hands in his service. In fact, however, he became at length the grand actor, and the instrument of his companions, who never failed to solicit the aid of so powerful an auxiliary in all their undertakings, while for him to draw back, would be to forfeit his reputation, and come short of what he had assumed. He went on thus, till, on his own service and that of others, he had gone to such a length, that neither his name, family, friends, nor even his own audacity, sufficed to secure him against public proclamations and outlawry, and he was compelled to give way and leave the state. I believe it is to this circumstance that a remarkable incident, related by Ripamonti, refers. "On one occasion, when obliged to quit the country, the secrecy he used, and the respect and timidity he displayed were such, that he rode through the city on horseback, followed by a pack of hounds, and accompanied with the sound of the trumpet; and, in passing before the palace of the court, left an insolent message with the guards, for the governor."

During his absence he continued the same practices, not even intermitting his correspondence with those of his friends who remained united to him (to translate literally from Ripamonti), "in the secret alliance of atrocious consultations and fatal deeds." It even appears that he engaged the foreign courts in other new and formidable undertakings, of which the above-cited historian speaks with mysterious brevity. "Some foreign princes several times availed themselves of his assistance in important murders, and frequently sent him reinforcements of soldiers, from a considerable distance, to act under his orders."

At length (it is not exactly known how long afterwards) either the sentence of banishment against him



being withdrawn, by some powerful intercession, or the audacity of the man serving him in place of any other liberation, he resolved to return home, and, in fact, *did* return; not, however, to Milan, but to a castle on his manor, situated on the confines of the Bergamascan territory, at that time, as most of our readers know, under Venetian government; and here he fixed his abode. "This dwelling," we again quote Ripamonti, "was, as it were, a dispensary of sanguinary mandates: the servants were outlaws and murderers; the very cooks and scullions were not exempt from homicide; the hands of the children were stained with blood." Besides this amiable domestic circle, he had, as the same historian affirms, another set of dependents of a similar character dispersed abroad, and quartered, so to say, at different posts in the two states on the borders of which he lived, who were always ready to execute his orders.

All the tyrannical noblemen for a considerable distance round, had been obliged, on one occasion or another, to choose between the friendship or the enmity of this supereminent tyrant. Those, however, who at first attempted to resist him, came off so badly in the contest, that no one was ever induced to make a second trial. Neither was it possible, by maintaining a neutral course, or standing, as the saying is, in their own shoes, to keep themselves independent of him. If a message arrived, intimating that such a person must desist from such an undertaking, or cease to molest such a debtor, or so forth; it was necessary to give a decided answer one way or other. When one party came, with the homage of a vassal, to refer any business to his arbitration, the other party was reduced to the hard alternative of either abiding by his sentence, or publicly declaring hostilities; which was equivalent to being, as the saying is, in the last stage of consumption. Many who were in the wrong, had recourse to him that they might be right in effect; many being in the right, yet resorted to



him to pre-engage so powerful a patronage, and close the way against their adversaries ; thus both bad and good came to be dependent upon him. It sometimes happened that the weak, oppressed, harassed, and tyrannized over by some powerful lord, turned to him for protection ; he would then take the part of the oppressed, and force the oppressor to abstain from further injuries, to repair the wrongs he had committed, and even to stoop to apologies ; or, in case of his proving stubborn and unbending, he would completely crush his power, constrain him to quit the place where he had exercised such unjust influence, or even make him pay a more expeditious and more terrible penalty. In these cases, his name, usually so dreaded and abhorred, became, for a time, an object of blessing : for (I will not say, this justice, but) this remedy, this recompense of some sort, could not have been expected, under the circumstances of the times, from any other either public or private source. More frequently, and indeed ordinarily, his power and authority ministered to iniquitous desires, atrocious revenge, or outrageous caprice. But the very opposite uses he made of this power produced in the end the self-same effect, that of impressing all minds with a lofty idea of how much he could will and execute in spite of equity or iniquity, those two things which interpose so many impediments to the accomplishment of man's desires, and so often force him to turn back. The fame of ordinary oppressors was for the most part restricted to the limited tract of country where they continually or frequently exercised their oppression : each district had its own tyrant ; and these so resembled each other, that there was no reason that people should interfere with those from whom they sustained neither injury nor molestation. But the fame of this man had long been diffused throughout every corner of the Milanese : his life was everywhere the subject of popular stories ; and his very name carried with it the idea of



something formidable, dark, and fabulous. The suspicions that were everywhere entertained of his confederates and tools of assassination, contributed to keep alive a constant memento of him. They were nothing more than suspicions; since who would have openly acknowledged such a dependence? but every tyrant might be his associate, every robber one of his assassins; and the very uncertainty of the fact rendered the opinion more general, and the terror more profound. At every appearance of an unknown ruffian, more savage-looking than usual; at every enormous crime, the author of which could not be at first pointed out or conjectured, the name of this man was pronounced and whispered about, whom, thanks to the happy circumspection, to give it no other epithet, of our authors, we shall be obliged to designate The Unnamed.

The distance between his castle and the palace of Don Rodrigo was not more than seven miles: and no sooner had the latter become a lord and tyrant than he could not help seeing that, at so short a distance from such a personage, it would not be possible to carry on this profession without either coming to blows, or walking hand in hand with him. He had, therefore, offered himself and been accepted for a friend, in the same way, that is, as the rest: he had rendered him more than one service (the manuscript says nothing further); and had each time been rewarded by promises of requital and assistance in any cases of emergency. He took great pains, however, to conceal such a friendship, or at least of what nature and how strict it was. Don Rodrigo liked well enough to play the tyrant, but not the fierce and savage tyrant: the profession was to him a means, not an end: he wished to live at freedom in the city, to enjoy the conveniences, diversions, and honours of social life; and for this end he was obliged to keep up a certain appearance, make much of his family, cultivate



the friendship of persons in place, and keep one hand on the scales of justice, so as on any occasion to make them preponderate in his favour, either removing them altogether from view, or bringing them to bear with double force on the head of some individual, on whom he could thus more easily accomplish his designs than by the arm of private violence. Now, an intimacy, or it would be better to say, an alliance with a person of such notoriety, an open enemy of the public power, would certainly not have advanced his interests in these respects, and particularly with his uncle. However, the slight acquaintance which he was unable to conceal, might pass very well for an indispensable attention towards a man whose enmity was much to be deprecated, and thus it might receive excuse from necessity ; since one who assumes the charge of providing for another without the will or the means, in the long run consents that his protégé shall provide for himself up to a certain point in his own affairs ; and if he does not expressly give his consent, at least he winks at it.

One morning, Don Rodrigo set off on horseback, in the guise of a hunter, with a small escort of braves on foot, Griso at his side, and four others following behind him, and took the road to the castle of the Unnamed.







## CHAPTER XX.

**T**HE castle of the Unnamed was commandingly situated over a dark and narrow valley, on the summit of a cliff projecting from a rugged ridge of hills, whether united to them or separated from them it is difficult to say, by a mass of crags and rocks, and by a boundary of caverns and abrupt precipices, both flanking it and on the rear. The side which overlooked the valley was the only accessible one; rather a steep acclivity, certainly, but even and unbroken: the summit was used for pasturage, while the lower grounds were cultivated, and scattered here and there with habitations. The bottom was a bed of large stones, the channel, according to the season, of either a rivulet or a noisy torrent, which at that time formed the boundary of the two states. The opposite ridges, forming, so to speak, the other wall of the valley, had a small cultivated tract, gently inclining from the base; the rest was covered



with crags, stones, and abrupt risings, untrodden, and destitute of vegetation, excepting here and there a solitary bush in the interstices, or on the edges of the rocks.

From the height of this castle, like an eagle from his sanguinary nest, the savage nobleman surveyed every spot around where the foot of man could tread, and heard no human sound above him. At one view he could overlook the whole vale, the declivities, the bed of the stream, and the practicable paths intersecting the valley. That which approached his terrible abode by a zigzag and serpentine course, appeared to a spectator from below, like a winding thread; while from the windows and loop-holes on the summit, the Signor could leisurely observe any one who was ascending, and a hundred times catch a view of him. With the garrison of braves whom he there maintained, he could even oppose a tolerably numerous troop of assailants, stretching any number of them on the ground, or hurling them to the bottom, before they could succeed in gaining the height. He was not very likely, however, to be put to the trial, since no one who was not on good terms with the owner of the castle would venture to set foot within its walls, or even in the valley or its environs. The bailiff who should have chanced to be seen there would have been treated like an enemy's spy seized within the camp. Tragical stories were related of the last who had dared to attempt the undertaking; but they were then tales of by-gone days; and none of the village youths could remember having seen one of this race of beings, either dead or alive.

Such is the description our anonymous author gives of the place: nothing is said of the name; and for fear of putting us in the way of discovering it, he avoids all notice of Don Rodrigo's journey, bringing him at one jump into the midst of the valley, and setting him down



at the foot of the ascent, just at the entrance of the steep and winding footpath. Here stood an inn, which might also be called a guard-house. An antique sign suspended over the door, displayed on each side, in glowing colours, a radiant sun; but the public voice, which sometimes repeats names as they are first pronounced, and sometimes remodels them after its own fashion, never designated this tavern but by the title of *Malanotte*.\*

At the sound of a party approaching on horseback, an ill-looking lad appeared at the door-way well armed with knives and pistols, and after giving a glance at them, re-entered to inform three ruffians, who, seated at table, were playing with a very dirty pack of cards, reversed and laid one upon another like so many tiles. He who seemed to be the leader rose, and advancing towards the door, recognised a friend of his master's, and saluted him with a bow. Don Rodrigo, returning the salutation with great politeness, inquired if his master were in the castle, and receiving for an answer that he believed so, he dismounted from his horse, throwing the reins to Tiradritto, one of his retinue. Then, taking his musket from his shoulder, he handed it to Montanarolo, as if to disencumber himself of a useless weight, and render his ascent easier; but in reality, because he knew well enough that no one was permitted to mount that steep who carried a gun. Then taking out of his purse two or three *berlinghe*, he gave them to Tanabuso, saying: "Wait for me here; and in the meantime enjoy yourselves with these good people." He then presented the estimable chief of the party with a few gold crowns, one half for himself, and the rest to be divided among his companions; and at length, in company with Griso, who had also laid aside his weapons, began to ascend the cliff on foot. In the meanwhile, the three above-mentioned

\* Bad Night.



bravoes, together with their fourth companion, Squinter-notto, (what amiable names to be preserved with so much care!) remained behind with the three players, and the unfortunate boy, who was training for the gallows, to game, drink, and relate by turns their various feats of prowess.

Another bravo belonging to the Unnamed shortly overtook Don Rodrigo in his ascent; and after eyeing him for a moment, recognised a friend of his master's, and bore him company; by this means, sparing him the annoyance of telling his name, and giving a further account of himself to the many others whom he met, and with whom he was unacquainted. On reaching the castle, and being admitted, (having left Griso, however, outside,) he was conducted a roundabout way through dark corridors, and various apartments hung with muskets, sabres, and partisans, in each of which a bravo stood on guard; and after having waited some time, was at last ushered into the room where the Unnamed was expecting him.

The Signor advanced to meet Don Rodrigo, returning his salutation, and at the same time eyeing him from head to foot with the closest scrutiny, according to his usual habit, now almost an involuntary one, towards any one who approached him, even towards his oldest and most tried friends. He was tall, sun-burnt, and bald; and at first sight this baldness, the whiteness of his few remaining hairs, and the wrinkles on his face, would have induced the judgment that he was considerably beyond the sixty years he had scarcely yet attained: though on a nearer survey, his carriage and movements, the cutting sarcasm of his features, and the deep fire that sparkled in his eye, indicated a vigour of body and mind which would have been remarkable even in a young man.

Don Rodrigo told him that he came to solicit his advice



and assistance; that, finding himself engaged in a difficult undertaking, from which his honour would not now suffer him to retire, he had called to mind the promises of his noble friend, who never promised too much, or in vain; and he then proceeded to relate his infamous enterprise. The Unnamed, who already had some indefinite knowledge of the affair, listened attentively to the recital, both because he was naturally fond of such stories, and because there was implicated in it a name well known and exceedingly odious to him, that of Father Cristoforo, the open enemy of tyrants, not only in word, but, when possible, in deed also. The narrator then proceeded to exaggerate, in evidence, the difficulties of the undertaking:—the distance of the place, a monastery, the Signora! . . . At this word, the Unnamed, as if a demon hidden in his heart had suggested it, abruptly interrupted him, saying that he would take the enterprise upon himself. He took down the name of our poor Lucia, and dismissed Don Rodrigo with the promise: “You shall shortly hear from me what you are to do.”

If the reader remembers that infamous Egidio whose residence adjoined the monastery where poor Lucia had found a retreat, we will now inform him that he was one of the nearest and most intimate associates in iniquity of the Unnamed; and it was for this reason that the latter had so promptly and resolutely taken upon him to pledge his word. Nevertheless, he was no sooner left alone, than he began to feel, I will not say, repentance, but vexation at having made the promise. For some time past he had experienced, not exactly remorse, but a kind of weariness of his wicked course of life. These feelings, which had accumulated rather in his memory than on his conscience, were renewed each time any new crime was committed, and each time they seemed more multiplied and intolerable: it was like



constantly adding and adding to an already incommodious weight. A certain repugnance experienced on the commission of his earlier crimes, afterwards overcome and almost entirely excluded, again returned to make itself felt. But in his first misgivings, the image of a distant and uncertain future, together with the consciousness of a vigorous habit of body and a strong constitution, had only confirmed him in a supine and presumptuous confidence. Now, on the contrary, it was the thoughts of the future that embittered the retrospect of the past.—To grow old! To die! And then?—It is worthy of notice, that the image of death, which in present danger, when facing an enemy, usually only nerved his spirit, and inspired him with impetuous courage,—this same image, when presented to his mind in the solemn stillness of night, and in the security of his own castle, was always accompanied with a feeling of undefined horror and alarm. It was not death threatened by an enemy who was himself mortal; it was not to be repulsed by stronger weapons, or a readier arm; it came alone, it was suggested from within; it might still be distant, but every moment brought it a step nearer; and even while he was hopelessly struggling to banish the remembrance of this dreaded enemy, it was coming fast upon him. In his early days, the frequent examples of violence, revenge, and murder, which were perpetually exhibited to his view, while they inspired him with a daring emulation, served at the same time as a kind of authority against the voice of conscience: now an indistinct, but terrible idea of individual responsibility, and judgment independent of example, incessantly haunted his mind; now the thought of his having left the ordinary crowd of wicked doers, and surpassed them all, sometimes impressed him with a feeling of dreadful solitude. That God, of whom he had once heard, but whom he had long ceased either to deny or acknow-



ledge, solely occupied as he was in acting as though he existed not, now, at certain moments of depression without cause, and terror without danger, he imagined he heard repeating within him, "Nevertheless, I am." In the first heat of youthful passion, the laws which he had heard announced in His name had only appeared hateful to him; now, when they returned unbidden to his mind, he regarded them, in spite of himself, as something which would have a fulfilment. But that he might suffer nothing of this new disquietude to be apparent either in word or deed, he carefully endeavoured to conceal it under the mask of deeper and more vehement ferocity; and by this means also he sought to disguise it from himself, or entirely to stifle it. Envy (since he could neither annihilate nor forget them) the days in which he had been accustomed to commit iniquity without remorse, and without further solicitude than for its success, he used every endeavour to recall them, and to retain or recover his former unfettered, daring, and undisturbed will, that he might convince himself he was still the same man.

On this occasion, therefore, he had hastily pledged his word to Don Rodrigo, that he might close the door against all hesitation. Feeling, however, on his visitor's departure, a failing of the resolution that he had summoned up to make the promise, and gradually overwhelmed with thoughts presenting themselves to his mind, which tempted him to break his word, and which, if yielded to, would have made him sink very low in the eyes of his friend, a secondary accomplice, he resolved at once to cut short the painful conflict, and summoned Nibbio\* to his presence, one of the most dexterous and venturesome ministers of his enormities, and the one whom he was accustomed to employ in his correspondence with Egidio. With a resolute countenance he ordered

\* A kite.



him immediately to mount his horse, to go straight to Monza, to inform Egidio of the engagement he had made, and to request his counsel and assistance in fulfilling it.

The worthless messenger returned more expeditiously than his master expected, with Egidio's reply, that the undertaking was easy and secure: if the Unnamed would send a carriage which would not be known as his, with two or three well-disguised bravoës, Egidio would undertake the charge of all the rest, and would manage the whole affair. At this announcement, the Unnamed, whatever might be passing in his mind, hastily gave orders to Nibbio to arrange all as Egidio required, and to go himself, with two others whom he named, upon this expedition.

Had Egidio been obliged to reckon only on ordinary means for the accomplishment of the horrible service he had been requested to undertake, he certainly would not thus readily have given so unhesitating a promise. But in that very asylum, where it would seem all ought to have been an obstacle, the atrocious villain had a resource known only to himself; and that which would have been the greatest difficulty to others became an instrument to him. We have already related how the unhappy Signora on one occasion lent an ear to his addresses; and the reader may have understood that this was not the last time,—that it was but the first step in a career of abomination and bloodshed. The same voice, rendered imperative, and almost authoritative through guilt, now imposed upon her the sacrifice of the innocent creature who had been committed to her care.

The proposal was frightful to Gertrude. To lose Lucia by an unforeseen accident, and without any fault on her part, would have seemed to her a misfortune, a bitter punishment: but now she was enjoined to deprive herself of her society by a base act of perfidy, and to



convert a means of expiation into a fresh subject for remorse. The unhappy lady tried every method to extricate herself from the horrible command;—every method, except the only one which would have been infallible, and which still remained in her power. Guilt is a rigid and inflexible tyrant, against whom all are powerless but those who entirely rebel. On this Gertrude could not resolve, and she obeyed.

It was the day fixed; the appointed hour approached; Gertrude retired with Lucia into her private apartment, and there lavished upon her more caresses than usual, which Lucia received and returned with increasing affection: as the lamb, trembling under the hand of the shepherd as he coaxes and gently urges it forward, turns to lick that very hand, unconscious that the butcher waits outside the sheepfold, to whom the shepherd a moment before has sold it.

“I want you to do me a great service; one that nobody but you can do. I have plenty of persons ready to obey me, but none whom I dare trust. On some very important business, which I will tell you about afterwards, I want to speak to the Father-guardian of the Capuchins who brought you here to me, my poor Lucia; but it is absolutely necessary that no one should know I have sent for him. I have nobody but you who can secretly carry this message . . . .”

Lucia was terrified at such a request; and with her own native modesty, yet not without a strong expression of surprise, she endeavoured to dissuade her by adducing reasons which the Signora ought to have understood and foreseen: without her mother, without an escort, by a solitary road, in an unknown country . . . . But Gertrude, instructed in an infernal school, manifested much surprise and displeasure at finding this stubborn opposition in one whom she had so greatly benefited, and pretended to think her excuses very frivolous. In



broad day-light—a mere step—a road Lucia had travelled only a few days before, and which could be so described that even a person who had never seen it could not possibly go astray! . . . . In short, she said so much, that the poor girl, touched at once with gratitude and shame, suffered the words to escape: “Well, what am I to do?”

“Go to the convent of the Capuchins;” and here she again described the road; “ask for the Father-guardian, and tell him to come to me as quickly as possible; but not to let any one know that he comes at my request.”

“But what shall I say to the portress, who has never seen me go out, and will therefore be sure to ask whither I am going?”

“Try to get out without her seeing you; and if you can’t manage it, tell her you are going to such a church, where you have vowed to offer up some prayers.”

Here was a new difficulty for Lucia,—to tell a falsehood; but the Signora again showed herself so vexed by her repulses, and made her so ashamed of herself for interposing a vain scruple in the way of gratitude, that the poor girl, stupified rather than convinced, and greatly affected by her words, replied: “Very well; I will go. And may God help me!” And she set off.

But Gertrude, who from her grated window followed her with a fixed and anxious look, no sooner saw her set foot on the threshold, than, overcome by an irresistible emotion, she exclaimed: “Listen, Lucia!”

Lucia turned round, and advanced towards the window. But another thought, the thought accustomed to predominate, had already prevailed over Gertrude’s unhappy mind. Pretending that she was not yet satisfied with the instructions she had given, she again described to Lucia the road she must follow, and dismissed her, saying: “Do every thing as I have told you, and return quickly.” Lucia departed.



She passed the gate of the cloister unobserved, and took the road along the side of the wall, with her eyes bent to the ground; by the help of the directions she had received, and her own recollections, she found the city gate, and went out. Self-possessed, but still rather trembling, she proceeded along the high road, and shortly reached the turn to the convent, which she immediately recognised. This road was, and still is, buried, like the bed of a river, between two high banks bordered with trees, which spread their branches over it like a vaulted roof. Lucia felt her fears increase, and quickened her steps, as she found herself quite alone on entering it: but a few paces further her courage revived on seeing a travelling carriage standing, and two travellers looking this and that way, as if uncertain of the road. On drawing nearer, she overheard one of them saying: "Here is a good woman, who will show us the way." In fact, when she had got opposite the carriage, the same person, with a more courteous manner than countenance, turned and addressed her: "My good girl, can you tell us which is the way to Monza?"

"You have taken the wrong direction," replied the poor girl: "Monza is there . . ." and turning to point it out with her finger, the other companion (it was Nibbio) seized her unexpectedly round the waist, and lifted her from the ground. Lucia, in great alarm, turned her head round, and uttered a scream; the ruffian pushed her into the carriage; a third, who was seated in the back of it, concealed from view, received her, and forced her, in spite of her struggles and cries, to sit down opposite to him; while another put a handkerchief over her mouth, and stifled her cries. Nibbio now hastily threw himself into the carriage, shut the door, and they set off at a rapid pace. The other, who had made the treacherous inquiry, remained in the road, and looked hurriedly around: no one was to be seen:



he therefore sprang upon the bank, grasped a branch of the hedge which was planted upon the summit, pushed through the fence, and entering a plantation of green oaks, which, for a short distance, ran along the side of the road, stooped down there, that he might not be seen by the people who would probably be attracted by the cries. This man was one of Egidio's villains; he had been to watch near the gate of the monastery, had seen Lucia go out, had noticed her dress and figure, and had then run by a shorter way to wait for her at the appointed spot.

Who can represent the terror, the anguish of the unfortunate girl, or describe what was passing in her mind? She opened her terrified eyes, from anxiety to ascertain her horrible situation, and quickly closed them again with a shudder of fear at the sight of the dreadful faces that met her view: she writhed her body, but found that she was held down on all sides: she collected all her strength, and made a desperate effort to push towards the door; but two sinewy arms held her as if she were nailed to the bottom of the carriage, while four other powerful hands supported her there. At every signal she gave of intending to utter a cry, the handkerchief was instantly stuffed into her mouth to smother the sound, while three infernal mouths, with voices more human than they were accustomed to utter, continued to repeat: "Be still, be still; don't be afraid, we don't want to do you any harm." After a few moments of agonised struggle, she seemed to become quieter; her arms sank by her side, her head fell backwards, she half opened her eyelids, and her eyes became fixed; the horrible faces which surrounded her appeared to mingle and flock before her in one monstrous image; the colour fled from her cheek; a cold moisture overspread her face; her consciousness vanished, and she fainted away.



"Come, come, courage," said Nibbio. "Courage, courage," repeated the two other ruffians; but the prostration of every faculty preserved Lucia, at that moment, from hearing the consolations addressed to her by those horrible voices.

"The ——! she seems to be dead," said one of them: "if she's really dead!"

"Pshaw!" said the other: "It's only a swoon, such as women often fall into. I know well enough that when I've wanted to send another, be it man or woman, into the other world, it has required something more than this."

"Hold your tongues," said Nibbio. "Attend to your own business, and mind nothing else. Take your muskets from under the seat, and keep them in readiness; for there are always some villains hidden in the wood we are entering. Not in your hands, the ——! put them behind your backs, and let them lie there: don't you see that she's a cowardly chicken, who faints for nothing? If she sees fire-arms, it will be enough to kill her outright. And when she recovers, take good care you don't frighten her; don't touch her unless I beckon to you; I am enough to manage her. And hold your tongues: leave me to talk to her."

In the meanwhile the carriage, which was proceeding at a very rapid pace, entered the wood.

After some time, the unhappy Lucia gradually began to come to her senses, as if awaking from a profound and troubled sleep, and slowly opened her eyes. At first she found it difficult to distinguish the gloomy objects that surrounded her, and collect her scattered thoughts; but she at last succeeded in recalling her fearful situation. The first use she made of her newly-recovered, though still feeble powers, was to rush towards the door, and attempt to throw herself out; but she was forcibly restrained, and had only time to



get a glance at the wild solitude of the place through which they were passing. She again uttered a cry ; but Nibbio, holding up the handkerchief in his dreaded hand, "Come," said he, in the gentlest tone he could command, "be quiet, and it will be better for you. We don't want to do you any harm ; but if you don't hold your tongue, we'll make you."

"Let me go ! Who are you ? Where are you taking me ? Why have you seized me ? Let me go, let me go !"

"I tell you, you needn't be afraid : you're not a baby, and you ought to understand that we don't want to do you any harm. Don't you see that we might have murdered you a hundred times, if we had any bad intentions ?—so be quiet."

"No, no, let me go on my own business : I don't know you."

"We know you, however."

"O most holy Virgin ! Let me go, for pity's sake. Who are you ? Why have you taken me ?"

"Because we have been bid to do so."

"Who ? Who ? Who can have bid you ?"

"Hush !" said Nibbio, with a stern look ; "you mustn't ask me such questions."

Lucia made a third attempt to throw herself suddenly out of the window ; but finding it in vain, she again had recourse to entreaties ; and with her head bent, her cheeks bathed with tears, her voice interrupted by sobs, and her hands clasped before her, "Oh !" cried she, "for the love of God and the most holy Virgin, let me go ! What harm have I done ? I am an innocent creature, and have done nobody any harm. I forgive you the wrongs you have done me, from the bottom of my heart, and will pray God for you. If any of you have a daughter, a wife, a mother, think what they would suffer, if they were in this state. Remember that we must all die, and that you will one day want God to be



merciful towards you. Let me go; leave me here: the Lord will teach me to find my way."

"We cannot."

"You cannot! Oh my God! Why can't you? Where are you taking me? Why?"....

"We cannot; it's no use asking. Don't be afraid, for we won't harm you: be quiet, and nobody'll touch you."

Overcome with distress, agony, and terror, at finding that her words made no impression, Lucia turned to Him who holds the hearts of men in His hand, and can, when it pleaseth Him, soften the most obdurate. She sank back into the corner where she had been placed, crossed her arms on her breast, and prayed fervently, from the bottom of her heart: then, drawing out her rosary, she began to repeat the prayers with more faith and devotion than she had ever before done in her life. From time to time she would turn to entreat her companions, in hopes that she might gain the mercy she implored; but she implored in vain. Then she fell back, and again became senseless, only to awake to new anguish. But we have not the heart to relate these agonising vicissitudes more at length: a feeling of overpowering compassion makes us hasten to the close of this mournful journey, which lasted for more than four hours; succeeding which we shall be obliged to describe many hours of still more bitter anguish. We will transport ourselves to the castle, where the unhappy girl was expected.

She was awaited by the Unnamed with a solicitude and anxiety of mind which were very unusual. Strange! that he who had disposed of so many lives with an imperturbed heart, who in so many undertakings had considered as nothing the sufferings he inflicted, unless it were sometimes to glut his appetite with the fierce enjoyment of revenge, should now feel a recoiling, a regret—I might almost say, a feeling of alarm, at the



authority he was exercising over this Lucia,—a stranger, a poor peasant-girl! From a lofty window of his castle he had been for some time watching the entrance of the valley; by and bye the carriage made its appearance, slowly advancing along the road: for the rapid pace at which they had at first started, had curbed the mettle and cooled the ardour of the horses. And although, from the post where he stood to watch, the convoy looked no larger than one of those diminutive vehicles with which children are wont to amuse themselves, yet he hesitated not a moment to recognise it; and his heart began afresh to beat violently.

—Will she be there?—thought he immediately; and he continued to say to himself:—What trouble this creature gives me! I will free myself from it.—

And he prepared to summon one of his men, and despatch him immediately to meet the carriage, with orders to Nibbio to turn round, and conduct her at once to Don Rodrigo's palace. But an imperative *no*, that instantly flashed across his mind, made him at once abandon this design. Wearied at length by the desire of ordering something to be done, and intolerably tired of idly waiting the approach of the carriage, as it advanced slowly, step by step, like a traitor to his punishment, he at length summoned an old woman of his household.

This person was the daughter of a former keeper of the castle, had been born within its walls, and spent all her life there. All that she had seen and heard around her from her very infancy, had contributed to impress upon her mind a lofty and terrible idea of the power of her masters; and the principal maxim that she had acquired from instruction and example was, that they must be obeyed in everything, because they were capable of doing either great good or great harm. The idea of duty, deposited like a germ in the hearts of all



men, and mingling in hers with sentiments of respect, dread, and servile devotion, was associated with, and solely directed to, these objects. When the Unnamed became her lord, and began to make such terrible use of his power, she felt, from the first, a kind of horror, and, at the same time, a more profound feeling of subjection. In time she became habituated to what she daily saw and heard around her: the potent and unbridled will of such a Signor was, in her idea, a kind of justice appointed by fate. When somewhat advanced in years, she had married a servant of the household, who, being sent on some hazardous expedition, shortly afterwards left his bones on the highway, and her a widow in the castle. The vengeance which the Signor quickly took on the instruments of his death, yielded her a savage consolation, and increased her pride at being under such protection. From that time forward she rarely set foot outside the castle, and, by degrees, retained no other ideas of human life than such as she received within its precincts. She was not confined to any particular branch of service, but among such a crowd of ruffians, one or other was constantly finding her something to do, which furnished her with a never-failing subject for grumbling. Sometimes she would have clothes to repair, sometimes a meal to provide in haste, for one who had returned from an expedition, and sometimes she was called upon to exercise her medical skill in dressing a wound. The commands, reproaches, and thanks of these ruffians, were generally seasoned with jokes and rude speeches: "old woman" was her usual appellation; while the adjuncts which were perpetually attached to it, varied according to the circumstances and humour of the speaker. Crossed thus in her idleness, and irritated in her peevish temper, which were her two predominant passions, she sometimes returned these compliments with language in which Satan might have recognised



more of his own spirit than in that of her tormentors.

"You see that carriage down there?" said the Signor to this amiable specimen of woman-kind.

"I see it," replied she, protruding her sharp chin, and staring with her sunken eyes, as if trying to force them out of their sockets.

"Bid them prepare a litter immediately; get into it yourself, and let it be carried to Malanotte instantly, that you may get there before the carriage: it is coming on at a funeral pace. In that carriage there is . . . there ought to be . . . a young girl. If she's there, tell Nibbio it is my order that she should be put into the litter, and that he must come directly to me. You will come up in the litter with the . . . girl; and when you are up here, take her into your own room. If she asks you where you are taking her, whom the castle belongs to, take care . . ."

"Oh!" said the old woman.

"But," continued the Unnamed, "try to encourage her."

"What must I say to her?"

"What must you say to her? Try to encourage her, I tell you. Have you come to this age, and don't know how to encourage others when they want it! Have you ever known sorrow of heart? Have you never been afraid? Don't you know what words soothe and comfort at such moments? Say those words to her: find them in the remembrance of your own sorrows. Go directly."

As soon as she had taken her departure, he stood for a while at the window, with his eyes fixed on the carriage, which had already considerably increased in size; afterwards he watched the sun, at that moment sinking behind the mountain; then he contemplated the fleecy clouds scattered above the setting orb, and from their



usual greyish hue almost instantaneously assuming a fiery tinge. He drew back, closed the window, and began to pace up and down the apartment with the step of a hurried traveller.







## CHAPTER XXI.

**T**HE old woman immediately hastened to obey, and to give commands, under the sanction of that name, which, by whomsoever pronounced, always set the whole household on the alert; for it never entered the imagination of any one, that another person would venture to use it unauthorized. She reached Malanotte shortly before the carriage arrived; and on seeing it approach, got out of the litter, beckoned to the driver to stop, advanced towards the door, and whispered to Nibbio, who put his head out of the window, the wishes of his master.

Lucia aroused herself, on feeling the carriage stop, and, awaking from a kind of lethargy, was seized with renewed terror, as she wildly gazed around her. Nibbio had pushed himself back on the seat, and the old woman, with her chin resting on the door, was looking at Lucia,



and saying, "Come, my good girl; come, you poor thing; come with me, for I have orders to treat you well, and try to comfort you."

At the sound of a female voice, the poor girl felt a ray of comfort—a momentary flash of courage; but she quickly relapsed into still more terrible fears. "Who are you?" asked she, in a trembling voice, fixing her astonished gaze on the old woman's face.

"Come, come, you poor creature," was the unvaried answer she received. Nibbio, and his two companions, gathering from the words, and the unusually softened tones of the old hag, what were the intentions of their lord, endeavoured, by kind and soothing words, to persuade the unhappy girl to obey. She only continued, however, to stare wildly around; and though the unknown and savage character of the place, and the close guardianship of her keepers, forbid her indulging a hope of relief, she, nevertheless, attempted to cry out; but seeing Nibbio cast a glance towards the handkerchief, she stopped, trembled, gave a momentary shudder, and was then seized, and placed in the litter. The old woman entered after her; Nibbio left the other two villains to follow behind as an escort, while he himself took the shortest ascent to attend to the call of his master.

"Who are you?" anxiously demanded Lucia of her unknown and ugly-visaged companion: "Why am I with you? Where am I? Where are you taking me?"

"To one who wishes to do you good," replied the aged dame; "to a great . . . Happy are they to whom he wishes good! You are very lucky, I can tell you. Don't be afraid—be cheerful; he bid me try to encourage you. You'll tell him, won't you, that I tried to comfort you?"

"Who is he?—why?—what does he want with me? I don't belong to him! Tell me where I am! let me



go! bid these people let me go—bid them carry me to some church. Oh! you who are a woman, in the name of Mary the Virgin! . . . .”

This holy and soothing name, once repeated with veneration in her early years, and now for so long a time uninvoked, and, perhaps, unheard, produced in the mind of the unhappy creature, on again reaching her ear, a strange, confused, and distant recollection, like the remembrance of light and form in an aged person, who has been blind from infancy.

In the meanwhile, the Unnamed, standing at the door of his castle, was looking downwards, and watching the litter, as before he had watched the carriage, while it slowly ascended, step by step; Nibbio rapidly advancing before it at a distance which every moment became greater. When he had at length attained the summit, “Come this way,” cried the Signor; and taking the lead, he entered the castle, and went into one of the apartments.

“Well?” said he, making a stand.

“Everything exactly right,” replied Nibbio, with a profound obeisance; “the intelligence in time, the girl in time, nobody on the spot, only one scream, nobody attracted by it, the coachman ready, the horses swift, nobody met with: but. . . .”

“But what?”

“But . . . . I will tell the truth; I would rather have been commanded to shoot her in the back, without hearing her speak—without seeing her face.”

“What? . . . what? . . . what do you mean?”

“I mean that all this time . . . all this time . . . . I have felt too much compassion for her.”

“Compassion! What do you know of compassion? What is compassion?”

“I never understood so well what it was as this time; it is something that rather resembles fear; let it



once take possession of you, and you are no longer a man."

"Let me hear a little of what she did to excite your compassion."

"O, most noble Signor! such a time! . . . weeping, praying, and looking at one with such eyes! and becoming pale as death! and then sobbing, and praying again, and certain words . . ."

—I won't have this creature in my house,—thought the Unnamed, meanwhile, to himself.—In an evil hour I engaged to do it; but I've promised—I've promised. When she's far away . . .—And raising his face with an imperious air towards Nibbio, "Now," said he, "you must lay aside compassion, mount your horse, take a companion—two, if you like—and ride away, till you get to the palace of this Don Rodrigo, you know. Tell him to send immediately . . . immediately, or else . . ."

But another internal *no*, more imperative than the first, prohibited his finishing. "No," said he, in a resolute tone, almost, as it were, to express to himself the command of this secret voice. "No: go and take some rest; and to-morrow morning . . . you shall do as I will tell you."

—This girl must have some demon of her own,—thought he, when left alone, standing with his arms crossed on his breast, and his gaze fixed upon a spot on the floor, where the rays of the moon, entering through a lofty window, traced out a square of pale light, chequered like a draft-board by the massive iron bars, and more minutely divided into smaller compartments by the little panes of glass.—Some demon, or . . . some angel who protects her . . . Compassion in Nibbio! . . . To-morrow morning—to-morrow morning, early, she must be off from this; she must go to her place of destination; and she shall not be spoken of



again; and,—continued he to himself, with the resolution with which one gives a command to a rebellious child, knowing that it will not be obeyed;—and she shall not be *thought* of again, either. That animal of a Don Rodrigo must not come to pester me with thanks; for . . . . I don't want to hear her spoken of any more. I have served him because . . . . because I promised; and I promised, because . . . . it was my destiny. But I'm determined the fellow shall pay me well for this piece of service. Let me see a little . . . .—

And he tried to devise some intricate undertaking, to impose upon Don Rodrigo by way of compensation, and almost as a punishment; but the words again shot across his mind—Compassion in Nibbio!—What can this girl have done?—continued he, following out the thought;—I must see her. Yet no—yes, I will see her.—

He went from one room to another, came to the foot of a flight of stairs, and irresolutely ascending, proceeded to the old woman's apartment; here he knocked with his foot at the door.

“Who's there?”

“Open the door.”

The old woman made three bounds at the sound of his voice; the bolt was quickly heard grating harshly in the staples, and the door was thrown wide open. The Unnamed cast a glance round the room, as he paused in the doorway; and by the light of a lamp which stood on a three-legged table, discovered Lucia crouched down on the floor, in the corner farthest from the entrance.

“Who bid you throw her there, like a bag of rags, you uncivil old beldame?” said he to the aged matron, with an angry frown.

“She chose it herself,” replied she, in an humble tone: “I've done my best to encourage her; she can tell you so herself; but she won't mind me.”



"Get up," said he to Lucia, approaching her. But she, whose already terrified mind had experienced a fresh and mysterious addition to her terror at the knocking, the opening of the door, his footstep, and his voice, only gathered herself still closer into the corner, and, with her face buried in her hands, remained perfectly motionless, excepting that she trembled from head to foot.

"Get up; I will do you no harm . . . and I can do you some good," repeated the Signor . . . "Get up!" thundered he forth at last, irritated at having twice commanded in vain.

As if invigorated by fear, the unhappy girl instantly raised herself upon her knees, and joining her hands, as she would have knelt before a sacred image, lifted her eyes to the face of the Unnamed, and instantly dropping them, said; "Here I am, kill me if you will."

"I have told you I would do you no harm," replied the Unnamed, in a softened tone, gazing at her agonized features of grief and terror.

"Courage, courage," said the old woman; "if he himself tells you he will do you no harm . . ."

"And why," rejoined Lucia, with a voice in which the daringness of despairing indignation was mingled with the tremor of fear, "why make me suffer the agonies of hell? What have I done to you? . . ."

"Perhaps they have treated you badly? Tell me . . ."

"Treated me badly! They have seized me by treachery—by force! Why—why have they seized me? Why am I here? Where am I? I am a poor harmless girl. What have I done to you? In the name of God . . ."

"God, God!" interrupted the Unnamed, "always God! They who cannot defend themselves—who have not the strength to do it, must always bring forward



this God, as if they had spoken to him. What do you expect by this word? To make me? . . . ." and he left the sentence unfinished.

"O Signor, expect! What can a poor girl like me expect, except that you should have mercy upon me? God pardons so many sins for one deed of mercy. Let me go; for charity's sake, let me go. It will do no good to one who must die, to make a poor creature suffer thus. Oh! you who can give the command, bid them let me go! They brought me here by force. Bid them send me again with this woman, and take me to \* \* \*, where my mother is. Oh! most holy Virgin! My mother! my mother!—for pity's sake, my mother. Perhaps she is not far from here . . . I saw my mountains. Why do you give me all this suffering? Bid them take me to a church; I will pray for you all my life. What will it cost you to say one word? Oh, see! you are moved to pity: say one word, oh say it! God pardons so many sins for one deed of mercy!"

—Oh, why isn't she the daughter of one of the rascally dogs that outlawed me!—thought the Unnamed;—of one of the villains who wish me dead; then I should enjoy her sufferings; but instead . . . —

"Don't drive away a good inspiration!" continued Lucia, earnestly, re-animated by seeing a certain air of hesitation in the countenance and behaviour of her oppressor. "If you don't grant me this mercy, the Lord will do it for me. I shall die, and all will be over with me; but you . . . Perhaps, some day, even you . . . But no, no; I will always pray the Lord to keep you from every evil. What will it cost you to say one word? If you knew what it was to suffer this agony! . . . ."

"Come, take courage," interrupted the Unnamed, with a gentleness that astonished the old woman. "Have I done you any harm? Have I threatened you?"



"Oh no! I see that you have a kind heart, and feel some pity for an unhappy creature. If you chose, you could terrify me more than all the others: you could kill me with fear; but instead of that, you have . . . rather lightened my heart; God will reward you for it. Finish your deed of mercy: set me free, set me free."

"To-morrow morning . . ."

"Oh! set me free now—now . . ."

"To-morrow morning, I will see you again, I say. Come, in the meanwhile, be of good courage. Take a little rest; you must want something to eat. They shall bring you something directly."

"No, no; I shall die, if anybody comes here; I shall die! Take me to a church . . . God will reward you for that step."

"A woman shall bring you something to eat," said the Unnamed; and having said so, he stood wondering at himself how such a remedy had entered his mind, and how the wish had arisen to seek a remedy for the sorrows of a poor humble villager.

"And you," resumed he hastily, turning to the aged matron, "persuade her to eat something, and let her lie down to rest on this bed; and if she is willing to have you as a companion, well; if not, you can sleep well enough for one night on the floor. Encourage her, I say, and keep her cheerful. Beware that she has no cause to complain of you."

So saying, he moved quickly towards the door. Lucia sprang up, and ran to detain him, and renew her entreaties; but he was gone.

"Oh, poor me! Shut the door quickly." And having heard the door closed, and the bolt again drawn, she returned to seat herself in her corner. "Oh, poor me!" repeated she, sobbing; "whom shall I implore now? Where am I? Do you tell me—tell me, for



pity's sake, who is this Signor . . . he who has been speaking to me?"

"Who is he, eh?—who is he? Do you think I may tell you? Wait till he tells you himself. You are proud, because he protects you; and you want to be satisfied, and make me your go-between. Ask him himself. If I were to tell you this, I shouldn't get the good words he has just given you. I am an old woman, an old woman," continued she, muttering between her teeth. "Hang these young folks, who may make a fine show of either laughing or crying, just as they like, and yet are always in the right." But hearing Lucia's sobs, and the commands of her master returning in a threatening manner to her memory, she stooped towards the poor crouching girl, and, in a gentler and more humane tone, resumed; "Come, I have said no harm to you; be cheerful. Don't ask me questions which I've no business to answer; but pluck up heart, my good girl. Ah! if you knew how many people would be glad to hear him speak, as he has spoken to you! Be cheerful, for he will send you something to eat just now; and I know . . . by the way he spoke, I'm sure it will be something good. And then you will lie down, and . . . you will leave just a little corner for me," added she, with an accent of suppressed rancour.

"I don't want to eat, I don't want to sleep. Let me alone; don't come near me; but you won't leave the room?"

"No, no, not I," said the old woman, drawing back, and seating herself on an old arm-chair, whence she cast sundry glances of alarm, and at the same time of envy, towards the poor girl. Then she looked at the bed, vexed at the idea of being, perhaps, excluded from it for the whole night, and grumbling at the cold. But she comforted herself with the thoughts of supper, and with the hope that there might be some to spare for her,



Lucia was sensible of neither cold nor hunger, and, almost as if deprived of her senses, had but a confused idea of her very grief and terror, like the undefined objects seen by a delirious patient.

She roused herself, when she heard a knocking at the door; and raising her head, exclaimed, in much alarm, "Who's there?—who's there? Don't let any one in!"

"Nobody, nobody; good news!" said the old woman; "it's Martha bringing something to eat."

"Shut the door, shut the door!" cried Lucia.

"Ay, directly," replied the old woman; and taking a basket out of Martha's hand, she hastily nodded to her, shut the door, and came and set the basket on a table, in the middle of the room. She then repeatedly invited Lucia to come and partake of the tempting repast, and employing words, which, according to her ideas, were most likely to be efficacious in restoring the poor girl's appetite, broke forth into exclamations on the excellence of the food;—"Morsels which, when common people have once got a taste, they don't forget in a hurry! Wine, which her master drank with his friends . . . when any of them happened to arrive . . . and they wanted to be merry! Hem!" But seeing that all these charms produced no effect—"It is you who *won't* eat," said she. "Don't you be saying to-morrow that I didn't try to persuade you. I'll eat something, however; and then there'll be more than enough left for you, when you come to your senses, and are willing to do as you are bid." So saying, she applied herself with avidity to the refreshments. When she had satisfied herself, she rose, advanced towards the corner, and bending over Lucia, again invited her to take something, and then lie down.

"No, no, I don't want anything," replied she, with a feeble and almost drowsy voice. Then with more energy she continued; "Is the door locked?—is it well secured?" And having looked around, she rose, and



feeling with her hands, walked with a suspicious step towards the door.

The old woman sprang thither before her, stretched out her hand to the lock, seized the handle, shook it, rattled the bolt, and made it grate against the staple that received and secured it. "Do you hear?—do you see?—is it well locked? Are you content now?"

"Oh, content! I content here!" said Lucia, again arranging herself in her corner. "But the Lord knows I'm here!"

"Come to bed; what would you do there, crouching like a dog? Did ever anybody see a person refuse comforts, when he could get them?"

"No, no; let me alone."

"Well, it's your own wish. See, I'll leave you the best place; I'm lying here on the very edge; I shall be uncomfortable enough, for your sake. If you want to come to bed, you know what you have to do. Remember, I've asked you very often." So saying, she crept, dressed as she was, under the counterpane, and soon all was silent.

Lucia remained motionless, shrunk up into the corner, her knees drawn close to her breast, her hands resting on her knees, and her face buried in her hands. She was neither asleep nor awake, but worn out with a rapid succession—a tumultuous alternation, of thoughts, anticipations, and heart-throbbings. Recalled, in some degree, to consciousness, and recollecting more distinctly the horrors she had seen and suffered that terrible day, she would now dwell mournfully on the dark and formidable realities in which she found herself involved; then, her mind being carried onward into a still more obscure region, she had to struggle against the phantoms conjured up by uncertainty and terror. In this distressing state she continued for a long time, which we would here prefer to pass over rapidly; but at



length, exhausted and overcome, she relaxed her hold on her benumbed limbs, and sinking at full length upon the floor, remained for some time in a state more closely resembling real sleep. But suddenly awaking, as at some inward call, she tried to arouse herself completely, to regain her scattered senses, and to remember where she was, and how, and why. She listened to some sound that caught her ear; it was the slow, deep breathing of the old woman. She opened her eyes, and saw a faint light, now glimmering for a moment, and then again dying away: it was the wick of the lamp, which, almost ready to expire, emitted a tremulous gleam, and quickly drew it back, so to say, like the ebb and flow of a wave on the sea-shore; and thus, withdrawing from the surrounding objects ere there was time to display them in distinct colouring and relief, it merely presented to the eye a succession of confused and indistinct glimpses. But the recent impressions she had received quickly returned to her mind, and assisted her in distinguishing what appeared so disorderly to her visual organs. When fully aroused, the unhappy girl recognised her prison; all the recollections of the horrible day that was fled, all the uncertain terrors of the future, rushed at once upon her mind: the very calm in which she now found herself after so much agitation, the sort of repose she had just tasted, the desertion in which she was left, all combined to inspire her with new dread, till, overcome by alarm, she earnestly longed for death. But at this juncture, she remembered that she could still pray; and with that thought there seemed to shine forth a sudden ray of comfort. She once more took out her rosary, and began to repeat the prayers; and in proportion as the words fell from her trembling lips, she felt an indefinite confiding faith taking possession of her heart. Suddenly another thought rushed into her mind, that her prayer might, perhaps, be more readily accepted,



and more certainly heard, if she were to make some offering in her desolate condition. She tried to remember what she most prized, or, rather, what she had once most prized; for at this moment her heart could feel no other affection than that of fear, nor conceive any other desire than that of deliverance. She did remember it, and resolved at once to make the sacrifice. Rising upon her knees, and clasping her hands, from whence the rosary was suspended before her breast, she raised her face and eyes to heaven, and said, "O most holy Virgin! thou to whom I have so often recommended myself, and who hast so often comforted me!—thou who hast borne so many sorrows, and art now so glorious!—thou who hast wrought so many miracles for the poor and afflicted, help me! Bring me out of this danger; bring me safely to my mother, O Mother of our Lord; and I vow unto thee to continue a virgin! I renounce for ever my unfortunate betrothed, that from henceforth I may belong only to thee!"

Having uttered these words, she bowed her head, and placed the beads around her neck, almost as a token of her consecration, and, at the same time, as a safeguard, a part of the armour for the new warfare to which she had devoted herself. Seating herself again on the floor, a kind of tranquillity, a more childlike reliance, gradually diffused themselves over her soul. The *to-morrow morning*, repeated by the unknown nobleman, came to her mind, and seemed to her ear to convey a promise of deliverance. Her senses, wearied by such struggles, gradually gave way before these soothing thoughts; until at length, towards day-break, and with the name of her protectress upon her lips, Lucia sank into a profound and unbroken sleep.

But in this same castle there was one who would willingly have followed her example, yet who tried in vain.



After departing, or rather escaping, from Lucia, giving orders for her supper, and paying his customary visits to several posts in his castle, with her image ever vividly before his eyes, and her words resounding in his ears, the nobleman had hastily retired to his chamber, impetuously shut the door behind him, and hurriedly undressing, had lain down. But that image, which now more closely than ever haunted his mind, seemed at that moment to say : "Thou shalt not sleep!"—What absurd womanly curiosity tempted me to go see her?—thought he.—That fool of a Nibbio was right: one is no longer a man; yes, one is no longer a man! . . . . I? . . . . am I no longer a man? What has happened? What devil has got possession of me? What is there new in all this? Didn't I know, before now, that women always weep and implore? Even men do sometimes, when they have not the power to rebel. What the——! have I never heard women cry before?—

And here, without giving himself much trouble to task his memory, it suggested to him, of its own accord, more than one instance, in which neither entreaties nor lamentations availed to deter him from the completion of enterprises upon which he had once resolved. But these remembrances, instead of inspiring him with the courage he now needed to prosecute his present design, as it would seem he expected and wished they might, instead of helping to dispel his feelings of compassion, only added to them those of terror and consternation, until they compelled him to return to that first image of Lucia, against which he had been seeking to fortify his courage.—She still lives,—said he:—She is here; I am in time; I can yet say to her, Go, and be happy; I can yet see that countenance change; I can even say, Forgive me . . . . Forgive me? I ask forgiveness? And of a woman, too? I? . . . . Ah, however! if one word, one such word could do me good, could rid me of the demon that now possesses me, I would say it; yes, I feel that



I would say it. To what am I reduced! I'm no longer a man; surely, no longer a man! . . . Away!—said he, turning himself with impetuosity on the couch which had now become so hard, under the covering which had now become so intolerable a weight:—Away! these are fooleries which have many a time passed through my head. This will take its flight too.—

And to effect such a riddance, he began seeking some important subject, some of the many which often so busily occupied his mind, in hopes he might be entirely engrossed by it; but he sought in vain. All appeared changed: that which once most urgently stimulated his desires, now no longer possessed any charms for him: his passions, like a steed suddenly become restive at the sight of a shadow, refused to carry him any further. In reflecting on enterprises engaged in, and not yet concluded, instead of animating himself to their completion, and feeling irritated at the obstacles interposed (for anger at this moment would have been sweet to him,) he felt regret, nay, almost consternation, at the steps already taken. His life presented itself to his mind devoid of all interest, deprived of all will, divested of every action, and only laden with insupportable recollections; every hour resembling that which now rolled so slowly and heavily over his head. He drew out before his fancy all his ruffians in a kind of battle array, and could contrive nothing of importance in which to employ one of them; nay, the very idea of seeing them again, and mixing among them, was an additional weight, a fresh object of annoyance and detestation. And when he sought an occupation for the morrow, a feasible employment, he could only remember that, on the morrow, he might liberate his unfortunate prisoner.

—I will set her free; yes, I will. I will fly to her by day-break, and bid her depart safely. She shall be accompanied by . . . And my promise? My engagement? Don Rodrigo? . . . Who is Don Rodrigo?—



Like one suddenly surprised by an unexpected and embarrassing question from a superior, the Unnamed hastily sought for an answer to the query he had just put to himself, or rather which had been suggested to him by that new voice which had all at once made itself heard, and sprung up to be, as it were, a judge of his former self. He tried to imagine any reasons which could have induced him, almost before being requested, to engage in inflicting so much suffering, without any incentives of hatred or fear, on a poor unknown creature, only to render a service to this man ; but instead of succeeding in discovering such motives as he would now have deemed sufficient to excuse the deed, he could not even imagine how he had ever been induced to undertake it. The willingness, rather than the determination to do so, had been the instantaneous impulse of a mind obedient to its old and habitual feelings, the consequence of a thousand antecedent actions ; and to account for this one deed, the unhappy self-examiner found himself involved in an examination of his whole life. Backwards from year to year, from engagement to engagement, from bloodshed to bloodshed, from crime to crime, each one stood before his conscience-stricken soul, divested of the feelings which had induced him to will and commit it, and therefore appearing in all its monstrousness, which those feelings had, at the time, prevented his perceiving. They were all his own, they made up himself : and the horror of this thought, renewed with each fresh remembrance, and cleaving to all, increased at last to desperation. He sprang up impetuously in his bed, eagerly stretched out his hand towards the wall at his side, touched a pistol, grasped it, reached it down, and . . . at the moment of finishing a life which had become insupportable, his thoughts, seized with terror and a (so to say) superstitious dread, rushed forward to the time which would still continue to flow on after his



end. He pictured with horror his disfigured corpse, lying motionless, and in the power of his vilest survivor; the astonishment, the confusion of the castle in the morning: every thing turned upside down; and he, powerless and voiceless, thrown aside, he knew not whither. He fancied the reports that would be spread, the conversations to which it would give rise, both in the castle, the neighbourhood, and at a distance, together with the rejoicings of his enemies. The darkness and silence around him presented death in a still more mournful and frightful aspect; it seemed to him that he would not have hesitated in open day, out of doors, and in the presence of spectators, to throw himself into the water, and vanish. Absorbed in such tormenting reflections, he continued alternately snapping and un-snapping the cock of his pistol with a convulsive movement of his thumb, when another thought flashed across his mind.—If this other life, of which they told me when I was a boy, of which every body talks now, as if it were a certain thing, if there be not such a thing, if it be an invention of the priests; what am I doing? why should I die? what matters all that I have done? what matters it? It is an absurdity, my . . . . But if there really be another life! . . . .—

At such a doubt, at such a risk, he was seized with a blacker and deeper despair, from which even death afforded no escape. He dropped the pistol, and lay with his fingers twined among his hair, his teeth chattering, and trembling in every limb. Suddenly the words he had heard repeated a few hours before rose to his remembrance:—God pardons so many sins for one deed of mercy!—They did not come to him with that tone of humble supplication in which they had been pronounced; they came with a voice of authority, which at the same time excited a distant glimmering of hope. It was a moment of relief: he raised his hands from his temples,



and, in a more composed attitude, fixed his mind's eye on her who had uttered the words; she seemed to him no longer like his prisoner and suppliant, but in the posture of one who dispenses mercy and consolation. He anxiously awaited the dawn of day, that he might fly to liberate her, and to hear from her lips other words of alleviation and life, and even thought of conducting her himself to her mother.—And then? what shall I do to-morrow for the rest of the day? What shall I do the day after to-morrow? And the day after that again? And at night? the night which will return in twelve hours? Oh, the night! no, no, the night!—And falling again into the weary void of the future, he sought in vain for some employment of time, some way of living through the days and nights. One moment he proposed leaving his castle, and going into some distant country, where he had never been known or heard of; but he felt that he should carry himself with him. Then a dark hope would arise that he should resume his former courage and inclinations, and that this would prove only a transient delirium. Now he dreaded the light which would show him to his followers so miserably changed; then he longed for it, as if it would bring light also to his gloomy thoughts. And, lo! about break of day, a few moments after Lucia had fallen asleep, while he was seated motionless in his bed, a floating and confused murmur reached his ear, bringing with it something joyous and festive in its sound. Assuming a listening posture, he distinguished a distant chiming of bells; and, giving still more attention, could hear the mountain echo, every now and then, languidly repeating the harmony, and mingling itself with it. Immediately afterwards his ear caught another, and still nearer peal; then another, and another.—What rejoicings are these? What are they all so merry about? What is their cause of gladness?—He sprang from his bed of thorns; and,



half dressing himself in haste, went to the window, threw up the sash, and looked out. The mountains were still wrapt in gloom; the sky was not so much cloudy, as composed of one entire lead-coloured cloud; but by the already glimmering light of day, he distinguished in the road, at the bottom of the valley, numbers of people passing eagerly along,—some leaving their dwellings and moving on with the crowd, and all taking the same direction towards the outlet of the vale on the right of the castle; he could even distinguish the joyous bearing and holiday dress of the passengers.—What the—— is the matter with these people? What cause of merriment can there be in this cursed neighbourhood?—And calling a confidential bravo who slept in the adjoining room, he asked him what was the cause of this movement. The man replied that he knew no more than his master, but would go directly to make inquiry. The Signor remained with his eyes riveted upon the moving spectacle, which increasing day rendered every moment more distinct. He watched crowds pass by, and new crowds constantly appear; men, women, children, in groups, in couples, or alone; one, overtaking another who was before him, walked in company with him; another, just leaving his door, accompanied the first he fell in with by the way: and so they proceeded together, like friends in a preconcerted journey. Their behaviour evidently indicated a common haste and joy; and the unharmonious, but simultaneous burst of the different chimes, some more, some less contiguous and distinct, seemed, so to say, the common voice of these gestures, and a supplement to the words which could not reach him from below. He looked and looked, till he felt more than common curiosity to know what could communicate so unanimous a will, so general a festivity, to so many different people.





## CHAPTER XXII.

**S**HORTLY afterwards the bravo returned with the information, that Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, had arrived the day before at —, with the purpose of spending there that which was now just dawning; that the news of his arrival, which had been spread around for a considerable distance the preceding evening, had excited a desire in the people to go and see this great man; and that the bells were ringing, both to express their joy, and more widely to diffuse the glad intelligence. When again alone, the Signor continued to look down into the valley, still more absorbed in thought.—For a man! Everybody eager, everybody joyful, at the sight of a man! And yet, doubtless, each has his own demon that torments him. But none, none will have one like mine! None will



have passed such a night as I have! What has this man about him to make so many people merry? Some pence, perhaps, that he will distribute at random among them. . . . But all these cannot be going for alms. Well then, a few acknowledgments and salutations—a word or two. . . . Oh! if he had any words for me that could impart peace! if! . . . Why shouldn't I go too? Why not? . . . I will go: what else can I do? I will go; and I will talk with him: face to face I'll have some talk with him. What shall I say, though? Well, whatever, whatever. . . . I'll hear first what the man has to say for himself!—

Having come to this vague determination, he hastily finished dressing himself, and put on, over all, a great coat, which had something of a military cut about it; he then took up the pistol which lay upon the bed, and secured it on one side of his belt, fastening at the other its fellow, which hung upon a nail in the wall; stuck a dagger into this same girdle; and taking a carabine from the wall, which was almost as famous as himself, swung it across his shoulders: then he put on his hat, quitted the apartment, and repaired at once to that in which he had left Lucia. Setting down his carabine in a corner near the door, he knocked, at the same time letting them know, by his voice, who he was. The old woman sprang out of bed, threw some article of clothing around her, and flew to open the door. The Signor entered, and, casting a glance around the room, saw Lucia lying in her little corner, and perfectly quiet.

“Does she sleep?” asked he, in an under-tone, of the old woman: “But is she sleeping there? were these my orders, you old hag?”

“I did all I could,” replied the woman; “but she wouldn't eat, and she wouldn't come. . . .”

“Let her sleep quietly; take care you don't disturb her; and when she awakes. . . . Martha shall wait in



the next room ; and you must send her to fetch anything that she may ask for. When she awakes . . . . tell her that I . . . . that the master has gone out for a little while, that he will be back soon, and that . . . . he will do all that she wishes."

The old woman stood perfectly astonished, thinking to herself:—This girl must surely be some princess!—

The Signor then left the room, took up his carabine, sent Martha to wait in the adjoining apartment, and the first bravo whom he met to keep guard, that no one but this woman might presume to approach Lucia; and then, leaving the castle, took the descent with a rapid step.

The manuscript here fails to mention the distance from the castle to the village where the Cardinal was staying: it cannot, however, have been more than a moderate walk. We do not infer the proximity merely from the flocking thither of the inhabitants of the valley; since we find, in the histories of these times, that people came for twenty miles, or more, to get but one sight of Cardinal Federigo. From the circumstances that we are about to relate, as happening on this day, we may, however, easily conjecture that the distance cannot have been very great. The braves whom he met ascending, stopped respectfully as their lord passed, waiting to see if he had any orders to give, or if he wished any of them to accompany him on some expedition, and seemed perfectly astonished at his countenance and the glances he returned in answer to their salutations.

When, however, he reached the base, and entered the public road, it was a very different matter. There was a general whispering among the first passengers who observed him, an exchange of suspicious looks, and an endeavour on each side to get out of his reach. For the whole length of the way he could not take two steps



by the side of another passenger; for every one who found him quickly gaining upon him, cast an uneasy look around, made him a low bow, and slackened his pace so as to remain behind. On reaching the village, he found a large crowd assembled; his name spread rapidly from mouth to mouth, the moment he made his appearance, and the throng fell back to make way for him. He accosted one of these prudent gentry, and asked where the Cardinal was. "In the Curate's house," replied the addressed party, reverently, at the same time pointing out the mansion. The Signor went forward, entered a little court, where many priests were assembled, all of whom regarded him with surprised and doubtful looks, and saw before him an open door, which gave admission into a small hall, where there was also collected a considerable number of priests. Taking his carabine from his shoulders, he deposited it in one corner of the little court, and then entered the hall, where he was received with significant glances, murmurs, and his oft-repeated name; then all was silent. Turning to one of those who surrounded him, he asked where the Cardinal was, and said that he wished to speak to him.

"I am a stranger," replied the priest; but hastily glancing around, he called the chaplain and cross-bearer, who, seated in a corner of the hall, was saying, in an under-tone, to his companion, "This man? this notorious character? what can he have to do here? Make way!" However, at this call, which resounded in the general silence, he was obliged to come forward; he made a lowly reverence to the Unnamed, listened to his inquiry, raised his eyes with uneasy curiosity towards his face, and instantly bending them on the ground, stood hesitating for a moment, and then said, or rather stammered out: "I don't know whether his illustrious lordship . . . just now . . . is to be . . . can . . . may . . . But I will go and see." And he very unwillingly carried the



message into the adjoining room, where the Cardinal was by himself.

At this point in our story, we cannot do less than pause for a little while; as the traveller, wearied and worn out with a lengthened journey, through a wild and sterile country, retards his pace, and halts for a little time under the shade of a noble tree, reclining on the grassy bank of a stream of running water. We have now fallen upon a person, whose name and memory, occurring when they will to the mind, refresh it with a calm emotion of reverence, and a pleasurable feeling of sympathy: how much more, then, after so many mournful pictures—after the contemplation of such fearful and hateful depravity! On the history of this personage, we must absolutely expend a few words: he who cares not about hearing them, and is anxious to proceed with the story, may pass on at once to the succeeding chapter.

Federigo Borromeo, born in 1564, was among those characters, rare in whatever age, who have employed singular talents, all the resources of great wealth, all the advantages of privileged rank, and an unwearied diligence, in the search and exercise of the highest objects and principles. His life resembles a rivulet, which, issuing limpid from the rock, flows in a ceaseless and unruffled, though lengthened course, through various lands, and, clear and limpid still, falls at last into the ocean. Amidst comforts and luxuries, he attended, even from childhood, to those lessons of self-denial and humility, and those maxims on the vanity of worldly pleasures, and the sinfulness of pride, on true dignity and true riches, which, whether acknowledged or not in the heart, have been transmitted from one generation to another in the most elementary instruction in religion. He attended, I say, to these lessons and maxims; he received them in real earnest; he tried them, and found them true; he saw, therefore, that other and contrary



lessons and maxims could not possibly be true, which yet were transmitted from age to age, with the same asseveration, and sometimes by the same lips ; and he resolved to take, as the rule of his thoughts and actions, those which were indeed right. By these he understood that life was not designed to be a burden to many, and a pleasure to only a few ; but was intended as a time of employment for all, of which every one would have to give an account ; and he began from a child to consider how he could render his useful and holy.

In 1580 he declared his resolution of dedicating himself to the ministry of the church, and received ordination from the hands of his cousin Carlo, whom long and universal suffrage had already signalized as a saint. Shortly afterwards, he entered the college founded by this relative in Pavia, which still bears the name of their house ; and here, while applying himself with assiduity to the occupations which were prescribed, he added to them two others, of his own free will ; and these were, to give instruction to the most ignorant and neglected among the population, in the doctrines of the Christian religion ; and to visit, assist, comfort, and relieve the sick and needy. He employed the authority conceded to him by all around, in inducing his companions to second him in such works of charity ; and set a noble example of spending, in every honest and beneficial employment, a pre-eminence which, considering his superior mind and talents, he would, perhaps, equally have attained had he been the lowest in rank and fortune. The advantages of a different nature, which the circumstances of fortune could have procured for him, he not only sought not after, but studiously neglected. He kept a table rather meagre than frugal, and wore a dress rather mean than decent ; while the whole tenor of his life and behaviour was in conformity with these particulars. Nor did he think it necessary to alter it, because some of his rela-



tives exclaimed loudly against such a practice, and complained that by this means he would degrade the dignity of the house. He had also another warfare to maintain against his instructors, who stealthily, and as it were by surprise, endeavoured to place before, behind, and around him, more noble appendages, something which might distinguish him from others, and make him appear the first in the place: either thinking, by this means, to ingratiate themselves with him in the long run; or influenced by that servile attachment which prides itself in, and rejoices at, the splendour of others; or being among the number of those prudent persons who shrink back with alarm from the extreme of virtue as well as vice, are for ever proclaiming that perfection lies in a medium between the two, and fix that medium exactly at the point which they have reached, and where they find themselves very much at their ease. Federigo not only refused these kindly offices, but rebuked the officious instruments: and that between the ages of childhood and youth.

That, during the life of the Cardinal Carlo, his senior by twenty-six years, in his authoritative and, so to say, solemn presence, surrounded by homage and respectful silence, incited by the fame, and impressed with the tokens of sanctity, Federigo, as a boy and a youth, should have endeavoured to conform himself to the behaviour and talents of such a cousin, is certainly not to be wondered at; but it is, indeed, much to be able to say, that, after his death, no one could perceive that Federigo, then twenty years of age, had lost a guide and censor. The increasing fame of his talents, erudition, and piety; the relationship and connexion of more than one powerful Cardinal; the credit of his family; his very name, to which Carlo had almost annexed in people's minds an idea of sanctity and sacerdotal pre-eminence; all that should, and all that could, lead men to



ecclesiastical dignities, concurred to predict them for him. But he, persuaded in heart of what no one who professes Christianity can deny with the lips, that there is no real superiority of a man over his fellow-men, excepting in so far as he devotes himself to their service, both dreaded exaltation, and sought to avoid it; not, indeed, that he might shrink from serving others—for few lives have been more devoted to this object than his own—but because he considered himself neither worthy enough of so high and perilous a service, nor sufficiently competent for it. For these reasons, the Archbishopric of Milan being offered to him in 1595, by Clement VIII., he seemed much disturbed, and refused the charge without hesitation. He yielded afterwards, however, to the express command of the Pope.

Such demonstrations (who knows it not?) are neither difficult nor uncommon; and it requires no greater effort of subtlety for hypocrisy to make them, than for raillery to deride them, and hold them cheap on every occasion. But do they, therefore, cease to be the natural expression of a wise and virtuous principle? One's life is the touchstone of profession; and the profession of this sentiment, though it may have been on the tongue of all the impostors and all the scoffers in the world, will ever be worthy of admiration, when preceded and followed by a life of disinterested self-sacrifice.

In Federigo, as Archbishop, was apparent a remarkable and constant carefulness to devote to himself no more of his wealth, his time, his care—in short, of his whole self, than was absolutely necessary. He said, as everybody says, that ecclesiastical revenues are the patrimony of the poor; how he showed he understood such a maxim in reality, will be evident from this fact. He caused an estimate to be taken of the sum required for his own expenditure, and that of those in his personal service; and being told that six hundred *scudi*



would be sufficient, (*scudo* was at that time the name of a golden coin which, retaining the same weight and value, was afterwards called a *zecchino*),\* he gave orders that this sum should annually be set apart out of his patrimonial estate, for the expenses of the table. So sparing and scrupulous was he in his personal outlay, that he was careful never to leave off a dress which was not completely worn out; uniting, however, as was recorded by contemporary writers, to this habit of simplicity, that of singular neatness: two remarkable qualities, in fact, in this age of ostentation and uncleanness. That nothing, again, might be wasted of the remnants of his frugal table, he assigned them to a hospital for the poor; one of whom came daily, by his orders, to the dining apartment, to gather up all that remained. Such instances of economy might, perhaps, suggest the idea of a close, parsimonious, over-careful virtue, of a mind wrapt up in attention to minutiae, and incapable of elevated designs, were it not for the Ambrosian Library, still standing, which Federigo projected with such noble magnificence, and executed, from the foundations upwards, with such munificent liberality; to supply which with books and manuscripts, besides the presentation of those he had already collected, with great labour and expense, he sent eight of the most learned and experienced men he could find, to make purchases throughout Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Flanders, Greece, Lebanon, and Jerusalem. By this means, he succeeded in gathering together about thirty thousand printed volumes, and fourteen thousand manuscripts. To this library he united a college of doctors; (nine in number at first, and maintained at his charge while he lived; afterwards, the ordinary income not sufficing for this expense, they were reduced to two.)

\* Sequin:—an Italian gold coin, worth about ten shillings of English money.



Their office was to cultivate various branches of study, theology, history, polite literature, and the Oriental languages, obliging each one to publish some work on the subject assigned to him. To this he also added a college, which he called *Trilingue*, for the study of the Greek, Latin, and Italian languages; a college of pupils, for instruction in these several faculties and languages, that they might become professors in their turn; a printing-office for the Oriental languages, for Hebrew, that is to say, Chaldaic, Arabic, Persian, and Armenian; a gallery of paintings, another of statues, and a school for the three principal arts of design. For these last he could find professors already existing; but as to the rest, we have seen the trouble it cost him to collect books and manuscripts. Undoubtedly, it would be more difficult to meet with types in those languages, then much less cultivated in Europe than they are at present; and still more difficult than types, would be men who understood them. Suffice it to say, that, out of nine professors, eight were taken from among the young pupils of the seminary; from which circumstance we may infer what was his opinion of the schools then established, and the celebrity gained in those days; an opinion agreeing with that which posterity seems to have formed of them, by suffering both one and the other to sink into oblivion. In the regulations which he left for the use and government of the library, a provision for perpetual utility is conspicuous, not only admirable in itself, but, in many particulars, judicious and elegant, far beyond the general ideas and habits of the age. He required the librarian to keep up a correspondence with the most learned men in Europe, that he might have information of the state of science, and intelligence of the best works on any subject that should be published, and immediately purchase them. He gave him in charge to point out to the students those



works which might assist them in their designs ; and ordered that the advantages of consulting the works here preserved should be open to all, whether citizens or strangers. Such a regulation will now appear quite natural—one and the same thing with the founding of a library ; but in those days it was not so. In a history of the Ambrosian Library, written (with the precision and elegance usual in that age) by one Pierpaolo Bosca, a librarian, after the death of Federigo, it is expressly noted as a remarkable fact, that, in this library, built by a private individual almost entirely at his own expense, the books were accessible to the view of all, and brought to any one who should demand them, with liberty to sit down and study them, and the provision of pen, ink, and paper, to take notes ; while, in some other celebrated public libraries in Italy, the volumes were not only not visible, but concealed in closets, where they were never disturbed, except when the humanity, as he says, of the presidents prompted them sometimes to display them for a moment. As to accommodation and conveniences for study provided for those who frequented it, they had not the least idea of such a thing. So that, to furnish such libraries, was to withdraw books from the use of the public ; one of those means of cultivation, many of which were, and still are, employed, that only serve to render the soil more sterile.

It were useless to inquire what were the effects of this foundation of Borromeo on public education : it would be easy enough to demonstrate in two words, according to the general method of demonstration, that they were miraculous, or that they were nothing ; but to investigate and explain, up to a certain point, what they really were, would be a work of much difficulty, little advantage, and somewhat ill-timed. Rather let us think what a generous, judicious, benevolent, perse-



vering lover of the improvement of mankind he must have been, who planned such an undertaking—who planned it on so grand a scale, and who executed it in the midst of ignorance, inertness, and general contempt of all studious application, and, consequently, in spite of "*What does it matter?*" and, "*There's something else to think about;*" and, "*What a fine invention!*" and "*This was certainly wanting;*" and similar remarks, which, undoubtedly, will have been more in number than the *scudi* expended by him in the undertaking, amounting to a hundred and five thousand, the greatest part of his property.

To style such a man beneficent and liberal in a high degree, it would be unnecessary, perhaps, that he should have spent much in the immediate relief of the needy; and there are, besides, many in whose opinion expenditure of the character we have described, and, indeed, I may say all expenditure, is the best and more beneficial almsgiving. But in Federigo's opinion, almsgiving, properly speaking, was a paramount duty; and here, as in every thing else, his actions were in accordance with his principles. His life was one continual overflowing charity. On occasion of this very scarcity, to which our story has already alluded, we shall have presently to relate several traits which will exhibit the judgment and delicacy he knew how to employ even in his liberality. Of the many remarkable examples which his biographers have recorded of this virtue, we will here cite but one. Having heard that a certain nobleman was using artifices and compulsion to force into a convent one of his daughters who wished rather to be married, he had an interview with her father; and drawing from him the acknowledgment that the true motive of this oppression was the want of four thousand *scudi*, which, according to his idea, were necessary towards marrying his daughter suitably, Federigo immediately presented the required dowry. Some may perhaps think this an extravagant



act of bounty, not well-judged, and too condescending to the foolish caprices of a vain nobleman; and that four thousand *scudi* might have been better employed in this or that manner. To which we have nothing to answer, excepting that it were devoutly to be wished that one could more frequently see excesses of a virtue so unfettered by prevailing opinion, (every age has its own,) and so free from the general tendency, as in this instance that must have been, which induced a man to give four thousand *scudi*, that a young person might not be made a nun.

The inexhaustible charity of this man appeared, not only in his almsgiving, but in his whole behaviour. Easy of access to all, he considered a cheerful countenance and an affectionate courtesy particularly due to those in the lower ranks of life; and the more so in proportion as they were little thought of by the world. Here, therefore, he had to combat with the gentlemen of the *ne quid nimis* school, who were anxious to keep him within limits, i. e. within their limits. One of these, on occasion of a visit to a wild and mountainous country, when Federigo was teaching some poor children, and during the interrogations and instruction was fondly caressing them, besought him to be more cautious in handling such children, as they were dirty and repelling: as if the worthy gentleman supposed that Federigo had not discernment enough to make the discovery, or acumen enough to suggest this recondite counsel for himself. Such, in certain circumstances of times and things, is the misfortune of men exalted to high stations, that while they so seldom find any one to inform them of their failings, there is no lack of persons courageous enough to reprove them for doing right. But the good Bishop, not without anger, replied: "They are my lambs, and perhaps may never again see my face; and would you not have me caress them?"



Very seldom, however, did he exhibit any anger, being admired for his mild and imperturbable gentleness of behaviour, which might be attributed to an extraordinarily happy temperament of mind; while, in truth, it was the effect of constant discipline over a naturally hasty and passionate disposition. If ever he showed himself severe, nay, even harsh, it was towards those pastors under his authority whom he discovered guilty of avarice, or negligence, or any other conduct opposed to the spirit of their high vocation. Upon what might affect his own interest or temporal glory, he never bethought either joy, regret, eagerness, or anxiety: wonderful indeed if these emotions were not excited in his mind; more wonderful if they were. Not only in the many conclaves at which he had assisted, did he acquire the reputation of having never aspired to that lofty post so desirable to ambition, and so terrible to piety; but on one occasion, when a colleague, who possessed considerable influence, came to offer him his vote and those of his (so, alas! it was termed) faction, Federigo refused the proposal in such a manner that his friend immediately abandoned the idea, and turned his views elsewhere. This same humility, this dread of pre-eminence, was equally apparent in the more common occurrences of life. Careful and indefatigable in ordering and governing every thing, where he considered it his duty to do so, he always shrank from intruding into the affairs of others, and even when solicited, refused, if possible, to interfere;—discretion and temperance far from common, as every body knows, in men as zealous in the cause of good as Federigo was.

Were we to allow ourselves to prosecute the pleasing task of collecting together the remarkable points in his character, the result would certainly be a complication of virtues in apparent opposition to each other, and assuredly difficult to find combined. We cannot, how-



ever, omit to notice one more excellency in his excellent life : replete as it was with action, government, functions, instruction, audiences, diocesan visitations, journeys, and controversies, he not only found time for study, but devoted as much to this object as a professor of literature would have required. Indeed, among many other and various titles of commendation, he possessed in a high degree, among his contemporaries, that of a man of learning.

We must not, however, conceal that he held with firm persuasion, and maintained, in fact, with persevering constancy, some opinions which, in the present day, would appear to every one rather singular than ill-founded ; even to such as would be anxious to consider them sound. For any one who would defend him on this head, there is the current and commonly-received excuse, that they were the errors of the age, rather than his own ; an excuse, to say the truth, which, when it results from the minute consideration of facts, may be valid and significant ; but which generally, applied in the usual naked way, and as we must do in this instance, comes in the end to mean exactly nothing at all. And, besides, not wishing to resolve complicated questions with simple formulæ, we will venture to leave this unsolved ; resting satisfied with having thus cursorily mentioned, that in a character so admirable as a whole, we do not pretend to affirm that every particular was equally so, lest we should seem to have intended making a funeral oration.

We shall not be doing injustice to our readers to suppose that some of them may inquire, whether this person has left any monument of so much talent and erudition. Whether he has left any ! The works remaining from him, great and small, Latin and Italian, published and manuscript, amount to about a hundred volumes, preserved in the library he himself founded : moral treatises,



discourses, dissertations on history, sacred and profane antiquities, literature, arts, and various other subjects.

—And however does it happen,—this inquirer may ask,—that so many works are forgotten, or at least so little known, so little sought after? How is it, that with such talents, such learning, such experience of men and things, such profound thought, such a sense of the good and the beautiful, such purity of mind, and so many other qualities which constitute the elegant author; how is it, that out of a hundred works, he has not left even one to be considered excellent by those who approve not of the whole, and to be known by title even by those who have never read it? How is it that all of them together have not sufficed, at least by their number, to procure for his name a literary fame among posterity?—

The inquiry is undoubtedly reasonable, and the question sufficiently interesting: because the reasons of this phenomenon are to be found, or, at least, must be sought for, in many general facts; and when found, would lead to the explanation of other similar phenomena. But they would be many and prolix: and what if they should not prove satisfactory? if they should make the reader turn away in disgust? So that it will be better to resume our “walk through” the story, and instead of digressing more at length on the character of this wonderful man, proceed to observe him in action under the conduct of our anonymous author.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

**C**ARDINAL FEDERIGO was employed, according to his usual custom in every leisure interval, in study, until the hour arrived for repairing to the church for the celebration of Divine Service, when the chaplain and cross-bearer entered with a disturbed and gloomy countenance.

“A strange visitor, my noble Lord,—strange indeed!”

“Who?” asked the Cardinal.

“No less a personage than the Signor . . .” replied the chaplain; and pronouncing the syllables with a very significant tone, he uttered the name which we cannot give to our readers. He then added: “He is here outside in person; and demands nothing less than to be introduced to your illustrious Grace.”

“He!” said the Cardinal, with an animated look, shutting his book, and rising from his seat; “let him come in!—let him come in directly!”



"But . . ." rejoined the chaplain, without attempting to move, "your illustrious Lordship must surely be aware who he is: that outlaw, that famous . . ."

"And is it not a most happy circumstance for a bishop, that such a man should feel a wish to come and seek an interview with him?"

"But . . ." insisted the chaplain, "we may never speak of certain things, because my Lord says that it is all nonsense: but, when it comes to the point, I think it is a duty . . . Zeal makes many enemies, my Lord; and we know positively that more than one ruffian has dared to boast that some day or other . . ."

"And what have they done?" interrupted the Cardinal.

"I say that this man is a plotter of mischief, a desperate character, who holds correspondence with the most violent desperadoes, and who may be sent . . ."

"Oh, what discipline is this," again interrupted Federico, smiling, "for the soldiers to exhort their general to cowardice?" Then resuming a grave and thoughtful air, he continued: "Saint Carlo would not have deliberated whether he ought to receive such a man: he would have gone to seek him. Let him be admitted directly: he has already waited too long."

The chaplain moved towards the door, saying in his heart:—There's no remedy; these saints are all obstinate.—

Having opened the door, and surveyed the room where the Signor and his companions were, he saw that the latter had crowded together on one side, where they sat whispering and cautiously peeping at their visitor, while he was left alone in one corner. The chaplain advanced towards him, eyeing him guardedly from head to foot, and wondering what weapons he might have hidden under that great coat; thinking, at the same time, that really, before admitting him, he ought at



least to have proposed . . . but he could not resolve what to do. He approached him, saying: "His Grace waits for your Lordship. Will you be good enough to come with me?" And as he preceded him through the little crowd, which instantly gave way for him, he kept casting glances on each side, which meant to say: What could I do? don't you know yourselves that he always has his own way?

On reaching the apartment, the chaplain opened the door, and introduced the Unnamed. Federigo advanced to meet him with a happy and serene look, and his hand extended, as if to welcome an expected guest, at the same time making a sign to the chaplain to go out; which was immediately obeyed.

When thus left alone, they both stood for a moment silent and in suspense, though from widely different feelings. The Unnamed, who had, as it were, been forcibly carried there by an inexplicable compulsion, rather than led by a determinate intention, now stood there, also as it were by compulsion, torn by two contending feelings: on the one side, a desire and confused hope of meeting with some alleviation of his inward torment: on the other, a feeling of self-rebuked shame at having come thither like a penitent, subdued, and wretched, to confess himself guilty, and to make supplication to a man: he was at a loss for words, and, indeed, scarcely sought for them. Raising his eyes, however, to the Archbishop's face, he became gradually filled with a feeling of veneration, authoritative, and at the same time soothing; which, while it increased his confidence, gently subdued his haughtiness, and, without offending his pride, compelled it to give way, and imposed silence.

The bearing of Federigo was, in fact, one which announced superiority, and, at the same time, excited love. It was naturally sedate, and almost involuntarily commanding, his figure being not in the least bowed or



wasted by age; while his solemn, yet sparkling eye, his open and thoughtful forehead, a kind of virginal floridness, which might be distinguished even among grey locks, paleness, and the traces of abstinence, meditation, and labour: in short, all his features indicated that they had once possessed that which is most strictly entitled beauty. The habit of serious and benevolent thought, the inward peace of a long life, the love that he felt towards his fellow-creatures, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of an ineffable hope, had now substituted the beauty (so to say) of old age, which shone forth more attractively from the magnificent simplicity of the purple.

He fixed, for a moment, on the countenance of the Unnamed, a penetrating look, long accustomed to gather from this index what was passing in the mind; and imagining he discovered, under that dark and troubled mien, something every moment more corresponding with the hope he had conceived on the first announcement of such a visit, "Oh!" cried he, in an animated voice, "what a welcome visit is this! and how thankful I ought to be to you for taking such a step, although it may convey to me a little reproof!"

"Reproof!" exclaimed the Signor, much surprised, but soothed by his words and manner, and glad that the Cardinal had broken the ice, and started some sort of conversation.

"Certainly, it conveys to me a reproof," replied the Archbishop, "for allowing you to be beforehand with me, when so often, and for so long a time, I might and ought to have come to you myself."

"You come to me! Do you know who I am? Did they deliver in my name rightly?"

"And the happiness I feel, and which must surely be evident in my countenance, do you think I should feel it at the announcement and visit of a stranger? It is



you who make me experience it ; you, I say, whom I ought to have sought ; you whom I have, at least, loved and wept over, and for whom I have so often prayed ; you, among all my children, for each one I love from the bottom of my heart, whom I should most have desired to receive and embrace, if I had thought I might hope for such a thing. But God alone knows how to work wonders, and supplies the weakness and tardiness of His unworthy servants."

The Unnamed stood astonished at this warm reception, in language which corresponded so exactly with that which he had not yet expressed, nor, indeed, had fully determined to express ; and, affected, but exceedingly surprised, he remained silent. " Well ! " resumed Federigo, still more affectionately, " you have good news to tell me ; and you keep me so long expecting it ? "

" Good news ! I have hell in my heart ; and can I tell you any good tidings ? Tell me, if you know, what good news you can expect from such as I am ? "

" That God has touched your heart, and would make you His own," replied the Cardinal, calmly.

" God ! God ! God ! If I could see Him ! If I could hear Him ! Where is this God ? "

" Do *you* ask this ? you ? And who has Him nearer than you ? Do you not feel Him in your heart, overcoming, agitating you, never leaving you at ease, and at the same time drawing you forward, presenting to your view a hope of tranquillity and consolation, a consolation which shall be full and boundless, as soon as you recognise Him, acknowledge, and implore Him ? "

" Oh, surely ! there is something within that oppresses, that consumes me ! But God ! If this be God, if He be such as they say, what do you suppose He can do with me ? "

These words were uttered with an accent of despair ;



but Federigo, with a solemn tone, as of calm inspiration, replied: "What can God do with you? What would He wish to make of you? A token of His power and goodness: He would acquire through you a glory, such as others could not give Him. The world has long cried out against you, hundreds and thousands of voices have declared their detestation of your deeds . . . ." (The Unnamed shuddered, and felt for a moment surprised at hearing such unusual language addressed to him, and still more surprised that he felt no anger, but rather, almost a relief.) "What glory," pursued Federigo, "will thus redound to God! *They* may be voices of alarm, of self-interest; of justice, perhaps—a justice so easy! so natural! Some perhaps, yea, too many, may be voices of envy of your wretched power; of your hitherto deplorable security of heart. But when you, yourself, rise up to condemn your past life, to become your own accuser, then! then, indeed, God will be glorified! And you ask what God can do with you. Who am I, a poor mortal, that I can tell you what use such a Being may choose henceforth to make of you? how He can employ your impetuous will, your unwavering perseverance, when He shall have animated and invigorated them with love, with hope, with repentance? Who are you, weak man, that you should imagine yourself capable of devising and executing greater deeds of evil, than God can make you will and accomplish in the cause of good? What can God do with you? Pardon you! save you! finish in you the work of redemption! Are not these things noble and worthy of Him? Oh, just think! if I, an humble and feeble creature, so worthless and full of myself—I, such as I am, long so ardently for your salvation, that, for its sake, I would joyfully give (and He is my witness!) the few days that still remain to me; oh, think what, and how great, must be the love of Him, Who inspires me



with this imperfect, but ardent affection ; how must He love you, what must He desire for you, Who has bid and enabled me to regard you with a charity that consumes me ! ”

While these words fell from his lips, his face, his expression, his whole manner, evinced his deep feeling of what he uttered. The countenance of his auditor changed, from a wild and convulsive look, first to astonishment and attention, and then gradually yielded to deeper and less painful emotions ; his eyes, which from infancy had been unaccustomed to weep, became suffused ; and when the words ceased, he covered his face with his hands, and burst into a flood of tears. It was the only and most evident reply.

“ Great and good God ! ” exclaimed Federigo, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, “ what have I ever done, an unprofitable servant, an idle shepherd, that Thou shouldest call me to this banquet of grace ! that Thou shouldest make me worthy of being an instrument in so joyful a miracle ! ” So saying, he extended his hand to take that of the Unnamed.

“ No ! ” cried the penitent nobleman ; “ no ! keep away from me : defile not that innocent and beneficent hand. You don’t know all that the one you would grasp has committed.”

“ Suffer me,” said Federigo, taking it with affectionate violence, “ suffer me to press the hand which will repair so many wrongs, dispense so many benefits, comfort so many afflicted, and be extended, disarmed, peacefully, and humbly, to so many enemies.”

“ It is too much ! ” said the Unnamed, sobbing, “ leave me, my Lord ; good Federigo, leave me ! A crowded assembly awaits you ; so many good people, so many innocent creatures, so many come from a distance, to see you for once, to hear you : and you are staying to talk . . . with whom ! ”



"We will leave the ninety and nine sheep," replied the Cardinal; "they are in safety, upon the mountain: I wish to remain with that which was lost. Their minds are, perhaps, now more satisfied than if they were seeing their poor bishop. Perhaps God, Who has wrought in you this miracle of mercy, is diffusing in their hearts a joy of which they know not yet the reason. These people are, perhaps, united to us without being aware of it: perchance the Spirit may be instilling into their hearts an undefined feeling of charity, a petition which He will grant for you, an offering of gratitude of which you are, as yet, the unknown object." So saying, he threw his arms round the neck of the Unnamed, who, after attempting to disengage himself, and making a momentary resistance, yielded, completely overcome by this vehement expression of affection, embraced the Cardinal in his turn, and buried in his shoulder his trembling and altered face. His burning tears dropped upon the stainless purple of Federigo, while the guiltless hands of the holy bishop affectionately pressed those members, and touched that garment, which had been accustomed to hold the weapons of violence and treachery.

Disengaging himself, at length, from this embrace, the Unnamed again covered his eyes with his hand, and raising his face to heaven, exclaimed; "God is, indeed, great! God is, indeed, good! I know myself now, now I understand what I am; my sins are present before me, and I shudder at the thought of myself; yet! . . . yet I feel an alleviation, a joy; yes, even a joy, such as I have never before known during the whole of my horrible life!"

"It is a little taste," said Federigo, "which God gives you, to incline you to His service, and encourage you resolutely to enter upon the new course of life which lies before you, and in which you will have so much



to undo, so much to repair, so much to mourn over!"

"Unhappy man that I am!" exclaimed the Signor: "how many, oh, how many . . . things for which I can do nothing besides mourn? But, at least, I have undertakings scarcely set on foot which I can break off in the midst, if nothing more: one there is which I can quickly arrest, which I can easily undo, and repair."

Federigo listened attentively, while the Unnamed briefly related, in terms of, perhaps, deeper execration than we have employed, his attempt upon Lucia, the sufferings and terrors of the unhappy girl, her importunate entreaties, the frenzy that these entreaties had aroused within him, and how she was still in the castle . . .

"Ah, then! let us lose no time!" exclaimed Federigo, breathless with eagerness and compassion. "You are indeed blessed! This is an earnest of God's forgiveness! He makes you capable of becoming the instrument of safety to one whom you intended to ruin. God bless you! Nay, He has blessed you! Do you know where our unhappy protégée comes from?"

The Signor named Lucia's village.

"It's not far from this," said the Cardinal, "God be praised; and probably . . ." So saying, he went towards a little table, and rang a bell. The cross-bearing chaplain immediately attended the summons with a look of anxiety, and instantly glanced towards the Unnamed. At the sight of his altered countenance, and his eyes still red with weeping, he turned an inquiring gaze upon the Cardinal; and perceiving, amidst the inviolable composure of his countenance, a look of solemn pleasure and unusual solicitude, he would have stood with open mouth, in a sort of ecstasy, had not the Cardinal quickly aroused him from his contemplations, by asking whether, among the parish-priests who



were assembled in the next room, there were one from \* \* \*.

"There is, your illustrious Grace," replied the chaplain.

"Let him come in directly," said Federigo, "and with him the priest of this parish."

The chaplain quitted the room, and on entering the hall where the clergy were assembled, all eyes were immediately turned upon him; while, with a look of blank astonishment, and a countenance in which was still depicted the rapture he had felt, he lifted up his hands, and waving them in the air, exclaimed, "Signori! Signori! *hæc mutatio dexteræ Excelsi.*" And he stood for a moment without uttering another word. Then assuming the tone and language of a message, he added, "His most noble and very reverend Lordship desires to speak with the Signor Curate of this parish, and the Signor Curate of \* \* \*."

The first party summoned immediately came forward; and, at the same time, there issued from the midst of the crowd, an "I?" drawled forth with an intonation of surprise.

"Are you not the Signor Curate of \* \* \*?" replied the chaplain.

"I am; but . . . ."

"His most noble and very reverend Lordship asks for you."

"Me?" again replied the same voice, clearly expressing in this monosyllable, "What *can* they want with me?" But this time, together with the voice, came forth the living being, Don Abbondio himself, with an unwilling step, and a countenance between astonishment and disgust. The chaplain beckoned to him with his hand, as if he meant to say, "Come, let us go; is it so very alarming?" and escorting them to the door, he opened it, and introduced them into the apartment.



The Cardinal relinquished the hand of the Unnamed, with whom, meanwhile, he had been concerting arrangements, and withdrawing a little aside, beckoned to the curate of the village. Briefly relating the circumstances, he asked whether he could immediately find a trustworthy woman who would be willing to go to the castle in a litter, and fetch away Lucia; a kind and clever person, who would know how to conduct herself in so novel an expedition, and whose manners and language would be most likely to encourage and tranquillize the unfortunate girl, to whom, after so much anguish and alarm, even liberation itself might be an additional cause of apprehension. After a moment's thought, the Curate said that he knew just the very person, and then took his departure. The Cardinal now calling to him the chaplain, desired him to have a litter and bearers immediately prepared, and to see that two mules were saddled, for riders; and as soon as he had quitted the apartment, turned to Don Abbondio.

This worthy gentleman, who had kept tolerably close to the Archbishop, that he might be at a respectful distance from the other Signor, and had, in the meantime, been casting side glances, first to one, and then to the other, dubitating the while within himself what ever all this strange manœuvring might mean, now advanced a step forward, and, making a respectful bow, said, "I was told that your most illustrious Lordship wanted me; but I think there must be some misunderstanding."

"There is no misunderstanding, I assure you," replied Federigo; "I have glad news to give you, and a pleasant and most agreeable task to impose upon you. One of your parishioners, whom you must have lamented as lost, Lucia Mondella, is again found, and is near at hand, in the house of my good friend here; and you will go now with him, and a woman, whom the Signor Curate



of this place has gone to seek; you will go, I say, to fetch thence one of your own children, and accompany her hither."

Don Abbondio did his best to conceal the vexation—the what shall I say?—the alarm, the dismay excited by this proposal, or command; and unable any longer to restrain or dismiss a look of inexpressible discontent already gathering in his countenance, he could only hide it by a profound reverence, in token of obedient acceptance; nor did he again raise his face, but to make another equally profound obeisance to the Unnamed, with a piteous look, which seemed to say, "I am in your hands, have pity upon me; *Parcere subjectis*."

The Cardinal then asked him what relations Lucia had.

"Of near relations, with whom she lives, or might live, she has only a mother," replied Don Abbondio.

"Is she at home?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Well," replied Federigo, "since this poor girl cannot be so directly restored to her own home, it will be a great consolation to her to see her mother as quickly as possible; so, if the Signor Curate of this village doesn't return before I go to church, I request you will tell him to find a cart, or some kind of conveyance, and despatch a person of discretion to fetch her mother here."

"Had not I better go?" said Don Abbondio.

"No, no, not you; I've already requested you to undertake another commission," replied the Cardinal.

"I proposed it," rejoined Don Abbondio, "to prepare her poor mother for the news. She is a very sensitive woman, and it requires one who knows her disposition, and how to go to work with her the right way, or he will do her more harm than good."

"And therefore I have requested you to acquaint the Signor Curate of my wish that a proper person should



be chosen for this office: you will do better elsewhere," replied the Cardinal. And he would willingly have added: That poor girl at the castle has far more need of shortly seeing a known and trusted countenance, after so many hours of agony, and in such terrible ignorance as to the future. But this was not a reason to be so clearly expressed before the present third party. Indeed, the Cardinal thought it very strange that it had not immediately occurred to Don Abbondio; that he had not thought of it himself; and the proffer he had made, and so warmly insisted upon, seemed so much out of place, that he could not help suspecting there must be something hidden beneath. He gazed upon his face, and there readily detected his fear of journeying with that terrible person, and of being his guest even for a few moments. Anxious, therefore, entirely to dissipate these cowardly apprehensions, yet unwilling to draw the curate aside and whisper with him in secret, while his new friend formed the third of their party, he judged that the best plan would be to do what, indeed, he would have done without such a motive, that is, address the Unnamed himself; and thus Don Abbondio might at length understand, from his replies, that he was no longer an object of fear. He returned, therefore, to the Unnamed, and addressing him with that frank cordiality which may be met with in a new and powerful affection, as well as in an intimacy of long standing, "Don't think," said he, "that I shall be content with this visit for to-day. You will return, won't you, with this worthy clergyman?"

"Will I return?" replied the Unnamed. "Should you refuse me, I would obstinately remain outside your door, like the beggar. I want to talk with you; I want to hear you, to see you; I deeply need you!"

Federigo took his hand and pressed it, saying: "Do the clergyman of this village, then, and me, the favour



of dining with us to-day. I shall expect you. In the meanwhile, I must go to offer up prayers and praises with the people; and you to reap the first-fruits of mercy."

Don Abbondio, at these demonstrations, stood like a cowardly child, who watches a person boldly petting and stroking a large, surly, shaggy dog, with glaring eyes, and a notoriously bad name for biting and growling, and hears its master say that his dog is a good and very quiet beast: he looks at the owner, and neither contradicts nor assents; he looks at the animal, afraid to approach him for fear the "very gentle beast" should show his teeth, were it only from habit; and equally afraid to run away, lest he should be thought a coward; and can only utter an internal aspiration:—Would that I were safe in my own house!

On quitting the apartment, in company with the Un-named, whose hand he still grasped, the Cardinal cast another glance upon the poor man who remained behind, looking very awkward and mortified, and with a doleful expression of countenance. Thinking that possibly his vexation arose from being apparently overlooked, and left, as it were, in a corner, particularly in contrast with the notoriously wicked character now so warmly received and welcomed, he turned towards him in passing, and hung back for a moment, and said to him, with a friendly smile: "Signor Curate, thou wert ever with me in the house of our kind Father, but this . . . this one *perierat, et inventus est.*"

"Oh, how glad I am to hear it!" said Don Abbondio, making a profound reverence to the two together.

The Archbishop then went on, gave a slight push to the door, which was immediately opened from without by two servants who stood outside, and the notable pair stood before the longing eyes of the clergy assembled in the apartment. They gazed with interest upon their



two countenances, both of which bore the traces of a very different, but equally profound emotion : a grateful tenderness, an humble joy, on Federigo's venerable features ; and on those of the Unnamed, confusion, tempered with consolation, a new and unusual modesty, and a feeling of contrition, through which the vigour of his wild and fiery temper was, nevertheless, still apparent. It was afterwards found that the passage in the prophet Isaiah had occurred to more than one of the spectators : *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock.* (Isa. lxxv. 25.) Behind them came Don Abbondio, to whom no one paid any attention.



When they had reached the middle of the room, the Cardinal's groom of the chamber entered on the opposite side, and informed his master that he had executed all the orders communicated to him by the chaplain ; that the litter and mules were in readiness, and they only waited the arrival of the female whom the curate was to bring. The Cardinal bid him tell the priest, when he came back, that Don Abbondio wished to speak with him ; and then all the rest was left under the direction



of the latter and the Unnamed, whom the Cardinal again shook warmly by the hand on taking leave, saying: "I shall expect you." Then, turning to salute Don Abbondio with a bow, he set off in the direction of the church, followed by the clergy, half grouped and half in procession, while the fellow-travellers remained alone in the apartment.

The Unnamed stood wrapt up in his own thoughts, and impatient for the moment when he might go to liberate his Lucia from her sufferings and confinement,—*his*, now, in a very different sense from that in which she was so the day before: and his face expressed a feeling of intense agitation, which, to Don Abbondio's suspicious eye, might easily appear something worse. He peeped and glanced at him from the corner of his eye, and longed to start some friendly conversation:—But what can I say to him?—thought he:—must I say again, I am glad? Glad of what? that having hitherto been a devil, he has at last resolved to become a gentleman, like others? A fine compliment, indeed! Eh, eh, eh! however I may turn the words, *I am glad* can mean nothing else. And, after all, will it be true that he has become a gentleman? so on a sudden! There are so many displays made in the world, and from so many motives! What do I know about it? And, in the meantime, I have to go with him: and to that castle! oh, what a tale! what a tale! what a tale is this to tell! who would have told me this, this morning! Ah, if I can but escape in safety, my lady Perpetua shan't soon hear the end of it from me, for having sent me here by force, when there was no necessity for it, out of my own parish: with her fine plausible reasons, that all the priests, for many a mile round, would flock hither, even those who were further off than I; and that I mustn't be behindhand; and this, that, and the other; and then to embark me in a business of this sort! Oh, poor



me! But I must say something to this man.—And he had just thought of that something, and was on the point of opening his mouth to say:—I never anticipated the pleasure of being thrown into such honourable company,—when the groom of the chamber entered, with the curate of the parish, who announced that the woman was waiting in the litter; and then turned to Don Abbondio, to receive from him the further commission of the Cardinal. Don Abbondio delivered himself as well as he could in the confusion of mind under which he was labouring; and then, drawing up to the groom, said to him: “Pray give me, at least, a quiet beast; for, to tell the truth, I am but a poor horseman.”

“You may imagine,” replied the groom, with a half smile: “it is the secretary’s mule, who is a very learned man.”

“That will do . . .” replied Don Abbondio, and he continued to ruminate:—Heaven send me a good one.—

The Signor had readily set off the moment he heard the announcement; but on reaching the door, and perceiving that Don Abbondio was remaining behind, he stood still to wait for him. When he came up, hastily, with an apologizing look, the Signor bowed and made him pass on first, with a courteous and humble air, which somewhat reanimated the spirits of the unfortunate and tormented man. But scarcely had he set foot in the court-yard, when he saw a new object of alarm, which quickly dissipated all his reviving confidence; he beheld the Unnamed go towards the corner, take hold of the barrel of his carabine with one hand, and of the strap with the other, and with a rapid motion, as if performing the military exercise, swing it over his shoulder.

—Alas! alas! woe is me!—thought Don Abbondio:—what would he do with that weapon? Suitable sackcloth, truly! fine discipline for a new convert! And



supposing some fancy should take him? Oh what an expedition! what an expedition!—

Could this Signor have suspected for a moment what kind of thoughts they were which were passing through his companion's mind, it is difficult to say what he would not have done to reassure him; but he was far enough away from such a suspicion, and Don Abbondio carefully avoided any movement which would distinctly express—I don't trust your lordship.—On reaching the door into the street, they found the two animals in readiness: the Unnamed mounted one, which was held for him by a hostler.

“Isn't it vicious?” said Don Abbondio to the valet, as he stood with one foot suspended on the stirrup, and the other still resting on the ground.

“You may go with a perfectly easy mind; it's a very lamb,” replied the man; and Don Abbondio, grasping the saddle, and assisted by the groom, gradually mounted upwards, and, at last, found himself safely seated on the creature's back.

The litter, which stood a few paces in advance, and was borne by two mules, moved forward at the word of the attendant, and the whole party set off.

They had to pass before the church, which was full to overflowing with people; and through a little square, also swarming with the villagers, and newly arrived visitors, whom the building could not accommodate. The glad news had already spread; and on the appearance of the party, and more especially of him who, only a few hours before, had been an object of terror and execration, but was now the object of joyful wonder, there arose from the crowd almost a murmur of applause; and as they made way for him, even their eagerness was hushed in the desire to obtain a near view of him. The litter passed on, the Unnamed followed; and when he arrived before the open door of the church, took off his hat, and bowed his hitherto dreaded forehead, till it almost



touched the animal's mane, amidst the murmur of a hundred voices, exclaiming, "God bless you!" Don Abbondio, also, took off his hat, and bending low, recommended himself to Heaven; but hearing the solemn harmony of his brethren, as they chanted in chorus, he was so overcome with a feeling of envy, a mournful tenderness of spirit, and a sudden fervour of heart, that it was with difficulty he restrained his tears.

When they got beyond the habitations into the open country, and in the often entirely deserted windings of the road, a still darker cloud overspread his thoughts. The only object on which his eye could rest with any confidence, was the attendant on the litter, who, belonging to the Cardinal's household, must certainly be an honest man; and who, besides, did not look like a coward. From time to time passengers appeared, sometimes even in groups, who were flocking to see the Cardinal, and this was a great relief to Don Abbondio; it was, however, but transitory, and he was advancing towards that tremendous valley, where he should meet none but the vassals of his companion; and what vassals! He now more than ever longed to enter into conversation with this companion, both to sound him a little more, and to keep him in good humour; but even this wish vanished on seeing him so completely absorbed in his own thoughts. He must then talk to himself; and we will present the reader with a part of the poor man's soliloquy during his journey, for it would require a volume to record the whole.

—It is a fine thing, truly, that saints as well as sinners must have quicksilver in their compositions, and cannot be content with fussing about and busying themselves, but must also bring into the dance with them the whole world, if they can; and that the greatest busy-bodies must just come upon me, who never meddle with any body, and drag me by the hair into their affairs;



me, who ask for nothing but to be left alone! That mad rascal of a Don Rodrigo! What does he want to make him the happiest man in the world, if he had but the least grain of judgment? He is rich, he is young, he is respected and courted: he is sick with too much prosperity, and must needs go about making trouble for himself and his neighbour. He might follow the ways of Saint Michael; oh, no! my gentleman doesn't choose; he chooses to set up the trade of molesting women, the most absurd, the most vile, the most insane business in the world: he might ride to heaven in his carriage, and chooses rather to walk halting to the devil's dwelling. And this man? . . . . And here he looked at him, as if he suspected he could hear his very thoughts.—This man! after turning the world upside down with his wickedness, now he turns it upside down with his conversion . . . . if it prove really so. In the meanwhile, it falls to me to make the trial! . . . . So it is, that when people are born with this madness in their veins, they must always be making a noise! Is it so difficult to act an honest part all one's life, as I have done? Oh no, my good sir: they must kill and quarter, play the devil . . . . oh, poor me! . . . . and then comes a great stir even when doing penance. Repentance, when there is an inclination to it, can be performed at home, quietly, without so much show, without giving so much trouble to one's neighbours. And his illustrious Lordship, instantly, instantly, with open arms, calling him his dear friend, his dear friend; and this man listens to all he says as if he had seen him work miracles; and then he must all at once come to a resolution, and rush into it hand and foot, one minute here, and the next there: we, at home, should call this precipitation. And to deliver a poor curate into his hands without the smallest security! this may be called playing with a man at great odds. A holy bishop, as he is,



ought to value his curates as the apple of his eye. It seems to me there might be a little moderation, a little prudence, a little charity along with sanctity . . . . Supposing this should be all a mere show? Who can tell all the intentions of men? and particularly of such a man as this? To think that it is my lot to go with him, to his own house! There may be some underwork of the devil here: oh, poor me! it is best not to think about it. How is Lucia mixed up with all this? It is plain Don Rodrigo had some designs upon her: what people! and suppose it is exactly thus, how then has this man got her into his clutches? Who knows, I wonder? It is all a secret with my Lord; and to me, whom they are making trot about in this way, they don't tell a word. I don't care about knowing other people's affairs; but when I have to risk my skin in the matter, I have a right to know something. If it be only to go and fetch away this poor creature, patience! though he could easily enough bring her straight away himself. And besides, if he is really converted, if he has become a holy father, what need is there of me? Oh, what a chaos! Well; it is Heaven's will it should be thus: it will be a very great inconvenience, but patience! I shall be glad, too, for this poor Lucia: she also must have escaped some terrible issue: Heaven knows what she must have suffered: I pity her; but she was born to be my ruin . . . . At least, I wish I could look into his heart, and see what he is thinking about. Who can understand him? Just look, now; one minute he looks like Saint Antony in the desert, the next he is like Holofernes himself. Oh, poor me! poor me! Well; Heaven is under an obligation to help me, since I didn't get myself into this danger with my own good will.—

In fact, the thoughts of the Unnamed might be seen, so to say, passing over his countenance, as in a stormy day the clouds flit across the face of the sun, producing



every now and then an alternation of dazzling light and gloomy shade. His soul, still quite absorbed in reflection upon Federigo's soothing words, and, as it were, renewed and made young again with fresh life, now rose with cheerful hope at the idea of mercy, pardon, and love; and then again sank beneath the weight of the terrible past. He anxiously tried to select those deeds of iniquity which were yet reparable, and those which he could still arrest in the midst of their progress; he considered what remedies would be most certain and expeditious, how to disentangle so many knots, what to do with so many accomplices; but it was all obscurity and difficulty. In this very expedition, the easiest of execution, and so near its termination, he went with a willingness mingled with grief at the thought, that in the meanwhile the poor girl was suffering, God knew how much, and that he, while burning to liberate her, was all the while the cause of her suffering. At every turn, or fork in the road, the mule-driver looked back for direction as to the way: the Unnamed signified it with his hand, and at the same time beckoned to him to make haste.

They entered the valley. How must Don Abbondio have felt then! That renowned valley, of which he had heard such black and horrible stories, to be actually within it! Those men of notorious fame, the flower of the bravoës of Italy, men without fear and without mercy,—to see them in flesh and blood,—to meet one, two, or three, at every turn of a corner! They bowed submissively to the Signor; but their sun-burnt visages! their rough mustachios! their large fierce eyes! they seemed to Don Abbondio's mind to mean,—Shall we dispatch that Priest?—So that, in a moment of extreme consternation, the thought rushed into his mind,—Would that I had married them! worse could not befall me.—In the meanwhile they went forward along a gravelly path



by the side of the torrent: on one hand was a view of isolated and solid rocks; on the other, a population which would have made even a desert seem desirable: Dante was not in a worse situation in the midst of Malebolge.

They passed the front of Malanotte; where bravoës were lounging at the door, who bowed to the Signor, and gazed at his companion and the litter. They knew not what to think: the departure of the Unnamed in the morning by himself had already seemed extraordinary, and his return was not less so. Was it a captive that he was conducting? And how had he accomplished it alone? And what was the meaning of a strange litter? And whose could this livery be? They looked and looked, but no one moved, because such was the command they read in his eye and expression.

They climbed the ascent, and reached the summit. The bravoës on the terrace and round the gate retired on either side to make room for him: the Unnamed motioned to them to retreat no farther, spurred forward and passed before the litter, beckoned to the driver and Don Abbondio to follow him, entered an outer court, and thence into a second, went towards a small postern, made signs to a bravo, who was hastening to hold his stirrup, to keep back, and said to him, "You there, and no one nearer." He then dismounted, and holding the bridle, advanced towards the litter, addressed himself to the female who had just drawn back the curtain, and said to her in an under-tone: "Comfort her directly; let her understand at once that she is at liberty, and among friends. God will reward you for it." He then ordered the driver to open the door, and assist her to get out. Advancing, then, to Don Abbondio, with a look of greater serenity than the poor man had yet seen, or thought it possible he could see, on his countenance, in which there might now be traced joy at the good-



work which was at length so near its completion, he lent him his arm to dismount, saying to him at the same time, in a low voice : " Signor Curate, I do not apologize for the trouble you have had on my account : you are bearing it for One who rewards bountifully, and for this His poor creature !"

This look, and these words, once more put some heart into Don Abbondio ; and, drawing a long breath, which for an hour past had been striving ineffectually to find vent, he replied, whether or not in a submissive tone it need not be asked : " Is your Lordship joking with me ? But, but, but, but ! . . . " And, accepting the hand which was so courteously offered, he slid down from the saddle as he best could. The Unnamed took the bridle, and handed it with his own to the driver, bidding him wait there outside for them. Taking a key from his pocket, he opened the postern, admitted the curate and the woman, followed them in, advanced to lead the way, went to the foot of the stairs, and they all three ascended in silence.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

**L**UCIA had aroused herself only a short time before; and part of that time she had been striving to awaken herself thoroughly, and to sever the disturbed dreams of sleep from the remembrances and images of a reality which too much resembled the feverish visions of sickness. The old woman quickly made up to her, and, with a constrained voice of humility, said: "Ah! have you slept? You might have slept in bed: I told you so often enough last night." And receiving no reply, she continued, in a tone of pettish entreaty: "Just eat something; do be prudent. Oh, how wretched you look! You must want something to eat. And then if, when he comes back, he's angry with me!"

"No, no; I want to go away, I want to go to my mother. Your master promised I should; he said, *tomorrow morning*. Where is he?"



"He's gone out; but he said he'd be back soon, and would do all you wished."

"Did he say so? did he say so? Very well; I wish to go to my mother, directly, directly."

And behold! the noise of footsteps was heard in the adjoining room; then a tap at the door. The old woman ran to it, and asked, "Who's there?"

"Open the door," replied the well-known voice, gently.

The old woman drew back the bolt, and, with a slight push, the Unnamed half opened the door, bid her come out, and hastily ushered in Don Abbondio and the good woman. He then nearly closed the door again, and waiting himself outside, sent the aged matron to a distant part of the castle, as he had before dismissed the other one, who was keeping watch outside.

All this bustle, the moment of expectation, and the first appearance of strange figures, made Lucia's heart bound with agitation; for, if her present condition was intolerable, every change was an additional cause of alarm. She looked up, and beheld a priest and a woman; this somewhat re-animated her; she looked more closely; is it he or not? At last, she recognised Don Abbondio, and remained with her eyes fixed, as if by enchantment. The female then drew near, and bending over her, looked at her compassionately, taking both her hands as if to caress and raise her at the same time, and saying: "Oh, my poor girl! come with us, come with us."

"Who are you?" demanded Lucia; but, without listening to the reply, she again turned to Don Abbondio, who was standing two or three yards distant, even his countenance expressing some compassion; she gazed at him again, and exclaimed: "You! Is it you? The Signor Curate? Where are we? . . . Oh, poor me! I have lost my senses!"

"No, no," replied Don Abbondio, "it is indeed I: take courage. Don't you see we are here to take you



away? I am really your curate, come hither on purpose on horseback . . . ."

As if she had suddenly regained all her strength, Lucia precipitately sprang upon her feet; then again fixing her eyes on those two faces, she said: "It is the Madonna, then, that has sent you."

"I believe indeed it is," said the good woman.

"But can we go away? Can we really go away?" resumed Lucia, lowering her voice, and assuming a timid and suspicious look. "And all these people? . . . ." continued she, with her lips compressed, and quivering with fear and horror: "And that Lord! . . . . that man! . . . . He did, indeed, promise . . . ."

"He is here himself in person, come on purpose with us," said Don Abbondio; "he is outside, waiting for us. Let us go at once; we mustn't keep a man like him waiting."

At this moment, he of whom they were speaking opened the door, and showing himself at the entrance, came forward into the room. Lucia, who but just before had wished for him, nay, having no hope in any one else in the world, had wished for none but him, now, after having seen and listened to friendly faces and voices, could not restrain a sudden shudder; she started, held her breath, and throwing herself on the good woman's shoulder, buried her face in her bosom. At the first sight of that countenance, on which, the evening before, he had been unable to maintain a steady gaze, now rendered more pale, languid, and dejected, by prolonged suffering and abstinence, the Unnamed had suddenly checked his steps; now, at the sight of her impulse of terror, he cast his eyes on the ground, stood for a moment silent and motionless, and then replying to what the poor girl had not expressed in words, "It is true," exclaimed he; "forgive me!"

"He is come to set you free; he's no longer what he



was; he has become good; don't you hear him asking your forgiveness?" said the good woman, in Lucia's ear.

"Could he say more? Come, lift up your head; don't be a baby; we can go directly," said Don Abbondio. Lucia raised her face, looked at the Unnamed, and seeing his head bent low, and his embarrassed and humble look, she was seized with a mingled feeling of comfort, gratitude, and pity, as she replied, "Oh! my Lord! God reward you for this deed of mercy!"

"And you a thousand fold, for the good you do me by these words."

So saying, he turned round, went towards the door, and led the way out of the room. Lucia, completely re-assured, followed, leaning on the worthy female's arm, while Don Abbondio brought up the rear. They descended the staircase, and reached the little door that led into the court. The Unnamed opened it, went towards the litter, and, with a certain politeness, almost mingled with timidity, (two novel qualities in him,) offered his arm to Lucia, to assist her to get in; and afterwards to the worthy dame. He then took the bridles of the two mules from the driver's hand, and gave his arm to Don Abbondio, who had approached his gentle steed.

"Oh what condescension!" said Don Abbondio, as he mounted much more nimbly than he had done the first time; and as soon as the Unnamed was also seated, the party resumed their way. The Signor's brow was raised: his countenance had regained its customary expression of authority. The ruffians whom they passed on their way, discovered, indeed, in his face the marks of deep thought, and an extraordinary solicitude; but they neither understood, nor could understand, more about it. They knew not yet anything of the great change which had taken place in their master;



and, undoubtedly, none of them would have divined it merely from conjecture.

The good woman immediately drew the curtains over the little windows; and then, affectionately taking Lucia's hands, she applied herself to comfort her with expressions of pity, congratulation, and tenderness. Seeing, then, that not only fatigue from the suffering she had undergone, but the perplexity and obscurity of all that had happened, prevented the poor girl from being sensible of the joy of her deliverance, she said all she could think of most likely to recall her recollection, and to clear up, and set to rights, so to say, her poor scattered thoughts. She named the village she came from, and to which they were now going.

"Yes!" said Lucia, who knew how short a distance it was from her own. "Ah, most holy Madonna, I praise thee! My mother! my mother!"

"We will send to fetch her directly," said the good woman, not knowing that it was already done.

"Yes, yes, and God will reward you for it . . . . And you, who are you? How have you come . . . ."

"Our Curate sent me," said the good woman, "because God has touched this Signor's heart, (blessed be His name!) and he came to our village to speak to the Signor Cardinal Archbishop, for he is there in his visitation, that holy man of God; and he has repented of his great sins, and wished to change his life; and he told the Cardinal that he had caused a poor innocent to be seized, meaning you, at the instigation of another person, who had no fear of God; but the Curate didn't tell me who it could be."

Lucia raised her eyes to heaven.

"You know who it was, perhaps," continued the good woman. "Well; the Signor Cardinal thought that, as there was a young girl in the question, there ought to be a female to come back with her; and he told the



Curate to look for one; and the Curate, in his goodness, came to me . . . .”

“Oh, the Lord recompense you for your kindness!”

“Well, just listen to me, my poor child! And the Signor Curate bid me encourage you, and try to comfort you directly, and point out to you how the Lord has saved you by a miracle . . . .”

“Ah yes, by a miracle indeed; through the intercession of the Madonna!”

“Well, that you should have a right spirit, and forgive him who has done you this wrong, and be thankful that God has been merciful to him, yes, and pray for him too; for, besides that you will be rewarded for it, you will also find your heart lightened.”

Lucia replied with a look which expressed assent as clearly as words could have done, and with a sweetness which words could not have conveyed.

“Noble girl!” rejoined the woman. “And your Curate, too, being at our village, (for there are numbers assembled from all the country round to elect four public officers,) the Signor Cardinal thought it better to send him with us; but he has been of little use: I had before heard that he was a poor-spirited creature; but on this occasion, I couldn’t help seeing that he was as frightened as a chicken in a bundle of hemp.”

“And this man . . . .” asked Lucia, “this person who has become good . . . . who is he?”

“What! don’t you know him?” said the good woman, mentioning his name.

“Oh, the mercy of the Lord!” exclaimed Lucia. How often had she heard that name repeated with horror in more than one story, in which it always appeared as, in other stories, that of the monster Orcus! And at the thought of having once been in his dreaded power, and being now under his merciful protection—at the thought of such fearful danger, and



such unlooked-for deliverance; and at the remembrance of whose face it was that had at first appeared to her so haughty, afterwards so agitated, and then so humbled, she remained in a kind of ecstasy, only occasionally repeating, "Oh, what a mercy!"

"It is a great mercy, indeed!" said the good woman. "It will be a great relief to half the world, to all the country round. To think how many people he kept in fear; and now, as our Curate told me . . . and then, only to see his face, he is become a saint! And the fruits are seen so directly."

To assert that this worthy person did not feel much curiosity to know rather more explicitly the wonderful circumstances in which she was called upon to bear a part, would not be the truth. But we must say, to her honour, that, restrained by a respectful pity for Lucia, and feeling, in a manner, the gravity and dignity of the charge which had been entrusted to her, she never even thought of putting an indiscreet or idle question; throughout the whole journey, her words were those of comfort and concern for the poor girl.

"Heaven knows how long it is since you have eaten anything!"

"I don't remember . . . not for some time."

"Poor thing! you must want something to strengthen you?"

"Yes," replied Lucia, in a faint voice.

"Thank God, we shall get something at home directly. Take heart, for it's not far now."

Lucia then sank languidly to the bottom of the litter, as if overcome with drowsiness, and the good woman left her quietly to repose.

To Don Abbondio the return was certainly not so harassing as the journey thither not long before; but, nevertheless, even this was not a ride of pleasure. When his overwhelming fears had subsided, he felt, at first,



as if relieved from every burden; but very shortly a hundred other fancies began to haunt his imagination; as the ground whence a large tree has been uprooted remains bare and empty for a time, but is soon abundantly covered with weeds. He had become more sensitive to minor causes of alarm; and in thoughts of the present, as well as the future, failed not to find only too many materials for self-torment. He felt now, much more than in coming, the inconveniences of a mode of travelling to which he was not at all accustomed, and particularly in the descent from the castle to the bottom of the valley. The mule-driver, obedient to a sign from the Unnamed, drove on the animals at a rapid pace; the two riders followed in a line behind, with corresponding speed, so that, in sundry steep places, the unfortunate Don Abbondio, as if forced up by a lever behind, rolled forward, and was obliged to keep himself steady by grasping the pommel of the saddle; not daring to request a slower pace, and anxious, also, to get out of the neighbourhood as quickly as he could. Besides this, wherever the road was on an eminence, on the edge of a steep bank, the mule, according to the custom of its species, seemed as if aiming, out of contempt, always to keep on the outside, and to set its feet on the very brink; and Don Abbondio saw, almost perpendicularly beneath him a good leap, or, as he thought, a precipice.—Even you,—said he to the animal, in his heart,—have a cursed inclination to go in search of dangers, when there is such a safe and wide path.—And he pulled the bridle to the opposite side, but in vain; so that, grumbling with vexation and fear, he suffered himself, as usual, to be guided at the will of others. The ruffians no longer gave him so much alarm, now that he knew for certain how their master regarded them.—But,—reflected he,—if the news of this grand conversion should get abroad among them while we are





still here, who knows how these fellows would take it? Who knows what might arise from it? What, if they should get an idea that I am come hither as a missionary! Heaven preserve me! they would martyr me!—The haughty brow of the Unnamed gave him no uneasiness.—To keep those visages there in awe,—thought he,—it needs no less than this one here; I understand that myself; but why has it fallen to my lot to be thrown amongst such people?—

But enough; they reached the foot of the descent, and at length also issued from the valley. The brow of the Unnamed became gradually smoother. Don Abbondio, too, assumed a more natural expression, released his head somewhat from imprisonment between his shoulders, stretched his legs and arms, tried to be a



little more at his ease, which, in truth, made him look like a different creature, drew his breath more freely, and, with a calmer mind, proceeded to contemplate other and remoter dangers.—What will that villain of a Don Rodrigo say? To be left in this way, wronged, and open to ridicule; just fancy whether that won't be a bitter dose. Now's the time when he'll play the devil outright. It remains to be seen whether he won't be angry with me, because I have been mixed up with this business. If he has already chosen to send those two demons to meet me on the high road with such an intimation, what will he do now, Heaven knows! He can't quarrel with his illustrious Lordship, for he's rather out of his reach; he'll be obliged to gnaw the bit with *him*. But all the while the venom will be in his veins, and he'll be sure to vent it upon somebody. How will all these things end? The blow must always fall somewhere; the lash must be uplifted. Of course, his illustrious Lordship intends to place Lucia in safety: that other unfortunate misguided youth is beyond reach, and has already had his share; so behold the lash must fall upon my shoulders. It will indeed be cruel, if, after so many inconveniences and so much agitation, without my deserving it, too, in the least, I should have to bear the punishment. What will his most illustrious Grace do now to protect me, after having brought me into the dance? Can he ensure that this cursed wretch won't play me a worse trick than before? And, besides, he has so many things to think of; he puts his hand to so many businesses. How can he attend to all? Matters are sometimes left more entangled than at first. Those who do good, do it in the gross; when they have enjoyed this satisfaction, they've had enough, and won't trouble themselves to look after the consequences; but they who have such a taste for evil-doings, are much more diligent; they follow it up to the end, and give themselves no rest,



because they have an ever-devouring canker within them. Must I go and say that I came here at the express command of his illustrious Grace, and not with my own good will? That would seem as if I favoured the wicked side. Oh, sacred Heaven! I favour the wicked side! For the pleasure it gives me! Well; the best plan will be to tell Perpetua the case as it is, and then leave it to her to circulate it; provided my Lord doesn't take a fancy to make the whole matter public, and bring even me into the scene. At any rate, as soon as ever we arrive, if he's out of church, I'll go and take my leave of him as quickly as possible; if he's not, I'll leave an apology, and go off home at once. Lucia is well attended to; there's no need for me; and after so much trouble, I, too, may claim a little repose. And besides . . . what if my Lord should feel some curiosity to know the whole history, and it should fall to me to give an account of that wedding business! This is all that is wanting to complete it. And if he should come on a visit to my parish? . . . Oh, let it be what it will, I will not trouble myself about it beforehand; I have troubles enough already. For the present, I shall shut myself up at home. As long as his Grace is in this neighbourhood, Don Rodrigo won't have the face to make a stir. And afterwards . . . oh, afterwards! Ah, I see that my last years are to be spent in sorrow!—

The party arrived before the services in the church were over; they passed through the still-assembled crowd, which manifested no less emotion than on the former occasion, and then separated. The two riders turned aside into a small square, at the extremity of which stood the Curate's residence, while the litter went forward to that of the good woman.

Don Abbondio kept his word: scarcely dismounted, he paid the most obsequious compliments to the Unnamed, and begged him to make an apology for him to



his Grace, 'as he must return immediately to his parish on urgent business. He then went to seek for what he called his horse, that is to say, his walking-stick, which he had left in a corner of the hall, and set off on foot. The Unnamed remained to wait till the Cardinal returned from church.

The good woman, having accommodated Lucia with the best seat in the best place in her kitchen, hastened to prepare a little refreshment for her, refusing, with a kind of rustic cordiality, her reiterated expressions of thanks and apology.

Hastily putting some dry sticks under a vessel, which she had replaced upon the fire, and in which floated a good capon, she quickly made the broth boil; and then, filling from it a porringer, already furnished with sops of bread, she was at length able to offer it to Lucia. And on seeing the poor girl refreshed at every spoonful, she congratulated herself aloud, that all this had happened on a day when, as she said, the cat was not sitting on the hearth-stone. "Everybody contrives to set out a table to-day," added she, "unless it be those poor creatures who can scarcely get bread of vetches, and a *polenta* of millet; however, they all hope to beg something to-day, from such a charitable Signor. We, thank Heaven, are not so badly off: what with my husband's business, and a little plot of ground, we can live very well, so that you needn't hesitate to eat with a good appetite; the chicken will soon be done, and you can then refresh yourself with something better." And, receiving the little porringer from her hand, she turned to prepare the dinner, and to set out the table for the family.

Invigorated in body, and gradually revived in heart, Lucia now began to settle her dress, from an instinctive habit of cleanliness and modesty: she tied up and arranged afresh her loose and dishevelled tresses, and



adjusted the handkerchief over her bosom, and around her neck. In doing this, her fingers became entangled in the chaplet she had hung there; her eye rested upon it; it aroused an instantaneous agitation in her heart; the remembrance of her vow, hitherto suppressed and stifled by the presence of so many other sensations, suddenly rushed upon her mind, and presented itself clearly and distinctly to her view. The scarcely-recovered powers of her soul were again at once overcome; and had she not been previously prepared by a life of innocence, resignation, and confiding faith, the consternation she experienced at that moment would have amounted to desperation. After a tumultuous burst of such thoughts as were not to be expressed in words, the only ones she could form in her mind were,—Oh, poor me, whatever have I done!—

But scarcely had she indulged the thought, when she felt a kind of terror at having done so. She recollected all the circumstances of the vow, her insupportable anguish, her despair of all human succour, the fervency of her prayer, the entireness of feeling with which the promise had been made. And after having obtained her petition, to repent of her promise seemed to her nothing less than sacrilegious ingratitude and perfidy towards God and the Virgin; she imagined that such unfaithfulness would draw down upon her new and more terrible misfortunes, in which she could not find consolation even in prayer; and she hastened to abjure her momentary regret. Reverently taking the rosary from her neck, and holding it in her trembling hand, she confirmed and renewed the vow, imploring, at the same time, with heart-rending earnestness, that strength might be given her to fulfil it; and that she might be spared such thoughts and occurrences as would be likely, if not to disturb her resolution, at least to harass her beyond endurance. The distance of Renzo, without any pro-



bability of return; that distance which she had hitherto felt so painful, now seemed to her a dispensation of Providence, who had made the two events work together for the same end; and she sought to find in the one a motive of consolation for the other. And, following up this thought, she began representing to herself that the same Providence, to complete the work, would know what means to employ to induce Renzo himself to be resigned, to think no more . . . . But scarcely had such an idea entered her mind, when all was again overturned. The poor girl, feeling her heart still prone to regret the vow, again had recourse to prayer, confirmation of the promise, and inward struggles, from which she arose, if we may be allowed the expression, like the wearied and wounded victor from his fallen enemy.

At this moment she heard approaching footsteps and joyous cries. It was the little family returning from church. Two little girls and a young boy bounded into the house, who, stopping a moment to cast an inquisitive glance at Lucia, ran to their mother, and gathered around her; one inquiring the name of the unknown guest, and how, and why; another attempting to relate the wonderful things they had just witnessed; while the good woman replied to each and all, "Be quiet, be quiet." With a more sedate step; but with cordial interest depicted on his countenance, the master of the house then entered. He was, if we have not yet said so, the tailor of the village and its immediate neighbourhood; a man who knew how to read, who had, in fact, read more than once *Il Leggendario de' Santi*, and *I Reali di Francia*, and who passed among his fellow-villagers as a man of talent and learning; a character, however, which he modestly disclaimed, only saying, that he had mistaken his vocation, and that, had he applied himself to study, instead of so many others . . . . and so on. With all this, he was the



best-tempered creature in the world. Having been present when his wife was requested by the Curate to undertake her charitable journey, he had not only given his approbation, but would also have added his persuasion, had it been necessary. And now that the services, the pomp, the concourse, and above all, the sermon of the Cardinal, had, as the saying is, elevated all his best feelings, he returned home with eager anticipations, and an anxious desire to know how the thing had succeeded, and to find the innocent young creature safe.

"See, there she is!" said his good wife, as he entered, pointing to Lucia, who blushed, and rose from her seat, beginning to stammer forth some apology. But he, advancing towards her, interrupted her excuses, congratulating her on her safety, and exclaiming, "Welcome, welcome! You are the blessing of Heaven in this house. How glad I am to see you here! I was pretty sure you would be brought out safely; for I've never found that the Lord began a miracle without bringing it to a good end; but I'm glad to see you here. Poor girl! but it is indeed a great thing to have received a miracle!"

Let it not be thought that he was the only person who thus denominated this event, because he had read the *Legendary*: as long as the remembrance of it lasted, it was spoken of in no other terms in the whole village, and throughout the neighbourhood. And, to say truth, considering its attendant and following consequences, no other name is so appropriate.

Then, sidling up to his wife, who was taking the kettle off the hook over the fire, he whispered, "Did everything go on well?"

"Very well; I'll tell you afterwards."

"Yes, yes, at your convenience."

Dinner now being quickly served up, the mistress of the house went up to Lucia, and leading her to the



table, made her take a seat; then cutting off a wing of the fowl, she set it before her, and she and her husband sitting down, they both begged their dispirited and bashful guest to make herself at home, and take something to eat. Between every mouthful, the tailor began to talk with great eagerness, in spite of the interruptions of the children, who stood round the table to their meal, and who, in truth, had seen too many extraordinary things, to play, for any length of time, the part of mere listeners. He described the solemn ceremonies, and then passed on to the miraculous conversion. But that which had made most impression upon him, and to which he most frequently returned, was the Cardinal's sermon.

"To see him there before the altar," said he, "a gentleman like him, like a Curate . . . ."

"And that gold thing he had on his head . . . ." said a little girl.

"Hush. To think, I say, that a gentleman like him, such a learned man, too, that from what people say, he has read all the books there are in the world; a thing which nobody else has ever done, not even in Milan—to think that he knew how to say things in such a way, that every one understood . . . ."

"Even I understood very well," said another little prattler.

"Hold your tongue: what may you have understood, I wonder?"

"I understood that he was explaining the Gospel, instead of the Signor Curate."

"Well, be quiet. I don't say those who know something, for then one is obliged to understand; but even the dullest and most ignorant could follow out the sense. Go now and ask them if they could repeat the words that he spoke: I'll engage they could not remember one: but the meaning they will have in their heads.



And without ever mentioning the name of that Signor, how easy it was to see that he was alluding to him ! Besides, to understand that, one had only to observe him with the tears standing in his eye. And then the whole church began to weep . . . .”

“ Yes, indeed, they did,” burst forth the little boy ; “ but why were they all crying in that way, like children ? ”

“ Hold your tongue. Surely there are some hard hearts in this country. And he made us see so well, that though there is a famine here, we ought to thank God, and be content ; do whatever we can, work industriously, help one another, and then be content, because it is no disgrace to suffer and be poor ; the disgrace is to do evil. And these are not only fine words ; for everybody knows that he lives like a poor man himself, and takes the bread out of his own mouth to give to the hungry, when he might be enjoying good times better than any one. Ah ! then it gives one satisfaction to hear a man preach : not like so many others ; ‘ Do what I say, and not what I do.’ And then he showed us that even those who are not what they call gentlemen, if they have more than they actually want, are bound to share it with those who are suffering.”

Here he interrupted himself, as if checked by some thought. He hesitated a moment ; then filling a platter from the several dishes on the table, and adding a loaf of bread, he put it into a cloth, and taking it by the four corners, said to his eldest girl : “ Here, take this.” He then put into her other hand a little flask of wine, and added : “ Go down to the widow Maria, leave her these things, and tell her it is to make a little feast with her children. But do it kindly and nicely, you know ; that it may not seem as if you were doing her a charity. And don’t say anything, if you meet any one ; and take care you break nothing.”



Lucia's eyes glistened, and her heart glowed with tender emotion; as from the conversation she had already heard, she had received more comfort than an expressly consolatory sermon could possibly have imparted to her. Her mind, attracted by these descriptions, these images of pomp, and these emotions of piety and wonder, and sharing in the very enthusiasm of the narrator, was detached from the consideration of its own sorrows; and on returning to them, found itself strengthened to contemplate them. Even the thought of her tremendous sacrifice, though it had not lost its bitterness, brought with it something of austere and solemn joy.

Shortly afterwards, the Curate of the village entered, and said that he was sent by the Cardinal to inquire after Lucia, and to inform her that his Grace wished to see her some time during the day; and then, in his Lordship's name, he returned many thanks to the worthy couple. Surprised and agitated, the three could scarcely find words to reply to such messages from so great a personage.

"And your mother hasn't yet arrived?" said the Curate to Lucia.

"My mother!" exclaimed the poor girl. Then hearing from him how he had sent to fetch her by the order and suggestion of the Archbishop, she drew her apron over her eyes, and gave way to a flood of tears, which continued to flow for some time after the Curate had taken his leave. When, however, the tumultuous feelings which had been excited by such an announcement began to yield to more tranquil thoughts, the poor girl remembered that the now closely impending happiness of seeing her mother again, a happiness so unhopedor a few hours previous, was what she had expressly implored in those very hours, and almost stipulated as a condition of her vow. *Bring me in safety to my*



*mother*, she had said; and these words now presented themselves distinctly to her memory. She strengthened herself more than ever in the resolution to maintain her promise, and afresh and more bitterly lamented the struggle and regret she had for a moment indulged.

Agnese, indeed, while they were talking about her, was but a very little way off. It may easily be imagined how the poor woman felt at this unexpected summons, and at the announcement, necessarily defective and confused, of an escaped but fearful danger,—an obscure event, which the messenger could neither circumstantiate nor explain, and of which she had not the slightest ground of explanation in her own previous thoughts. After tearing her hair,—after frequent exclamations of “Ah my God! Ah Madonna!”—after putting various questions to the messenger which he had not the means of satisfying, she threw herself impetuously into the vehicle, continuing to utter, on her way, numberless ejaculations and useless inquiries. But at a certain point she met Don Abbondio, trudging on, step after step, and before each step, his walking-stick. After an “oh!” from both parties, he stopped; Agnese also stopped and dismounted; and drawing him apart into a chestnut-grove on the road-side, she there learnt from Don Abbondio all that he had been able to ascertain and observe. The thing was not clear; but at least Agnese was assured that Lucia was in safety; and she again breathed freely.

After this Don Abbondio tried to introduce another subject, and give her minute instructions as to how she ought to behave before the Archbishop, if, as was likely, he should wish to see her and her daughter; and, above all, that it would not do to say a word about the wedding . . . . But Agnese, perceiving that he was only speaking for his own interest, cut him short, without promising, indeed without proposing, anything, for she had some-



thing else to think about; and immediately resumed her journey.

At length the cart arrived, and stopped at the tailor's house. Lucia sprang up hastily; Agnese dismounted and rushed impetuously into the cottage, and, in an instant, they were locked in each other's arms. The good dame, who alone was present, tried to encourage and calm them, and shared with them in their joy; then, with her usual discretion, she left them for a while alone, saying that she would go and prepare a bed for them; for which, indeed, she had the means, though, in any case, both she and her husband would much rather have slept upon the ground, than suffer them to go in search of shelter elsewhere for that night.

The first burst of sobs and embraces being over, Agnese longed to hear Lucia's adventures, and the latter began, mournfully, to relate them. But, as the reader is aware, it was a history which no one knew fully; and to Lucia herself there were some obscure passages, which were, in fact, quite inextricable: more particularly the fatal coincidence of that terrible carriage being in the road, just when Lucia was passing on an extraordinary occasion. On this point, both mother and daughter were lost in conjecture, without ever hitting the mark, or even approaching the real cause.

As to the principal author of the plot, neither one nor the other could for a moment doubt but that it was Don Rodrigo.

"Ah, the black villain! ah, the infernal firebrand!" exclaimed Agnese: "but his hour will come. God will reward him according to his works; and then he, too, will feel . . . ."

"No, no, mother; no!" interrupted Lucia; "don't predict suffering for him; don't predict it to any one! If you knew what it was to suffer! If you had tried it! No, no! rather let us pray God and the Madonna for



him : that God would touch his heart, as he has done to this other poor Signor, who *was* worse than he is, and is now a saint."

The shuddering horror that Lucia felt in retracing such recent and cruel scenes, made her more than once pause in the midst ; more than once she said she had not courage to go on ; and, after many tears, with difficulty resumed her account. But a different feeling checked her at a certain point of the narration,—at the mention of the vow. The fear of being blamed by her mother as imprudent and precipitate ; or that, as in the affair of the wedding, she should bring forward one of her broad rules of conscience, and try to make it prevail ; or that, poor woman, she should tell it to some one in confidence, if nothing else, to obtain light and counsel, and thus make it publicly known, from the bare idea of which Lucia shrank back with insupportable shame ; together with a feeling of present shame, an inexplicable repugnance to speak on such a subject ;—all these things together determined her to maintain absolute silence on this important circumstance, proposing, in her own mind, to open herself first to Father Cristoforo. But what did she feel, when, in inquiring after him, she heard that he was no longer at Pescarenico ; that he had been sent to a town far, far away, to a town bearing such and such a name !

" And Renzo ?" said Agnese.

" He's in safety, isn't he ?" said Lucia, hastily.

" That much is certain, because everybody says so ; it is thought, too, pretty surely, that he's gone to the territory of Bergamo ; but the exact place nobody knows : and hitherto he has sent no news of himself. Perhaps he hasn't yet found a way of doing so."

" Ah, if he's in safety, the Lord be praised !" said Lucia ; and she was seeking some other subject of conversation, when they were interrupted by an unex-



pected novelty—the appearance of the Cardinal Archbishop.

This holy prelate, having returned from church, where we last left him, and having heard from the Unnamed of Lucia's safe arrival, had sat down to dinner, placing his new friend on his right hand, in the midst of a circle of priests, who were never weary of casting glances at that countenance, now so subdued without weakness, so humble without dejection, and of comparing him with the idea they had so long entertained of this formidable personage.

Dinner being removed, the two again withdrew together. After a conversation, which lasted much longer than the first, the Unnamed set off anew for his Castle, on the same mule which had borne him thither in the morning; and the Cardinal, calling the priest of the parish, told him that he wished to be guided to the house where Lucia had found shelter.

"Oh, my Lord!" replied the parish priest, "allow me, and I will send directly to bid the young girl come here, with her mother, if she has arrived, and their hosts too, if my Lord wishes—indeed, all that your illustrious Grace desires to see."

"I wish to go myself to see them," replied Federigo.

"There's no necessity for your illustrious Lordship to give yourself that trouble; I will send directly to fetch them: it's very quickly done," insisted the persevering spoiler of his plans, (a worthy man on the whole,) not comprehending that the Cardinal wished by this visit to do honour at once to the unfortunate girl, to innocence, to hospitality, and to his own ministry. But the superior having again expressed the same desire, the inferior bowed, and led the way.

When the two companions were seen to enter the street, every one immediately gathered round them; and, in a few moments, people flocked from every direc-



tion, forming two wings at their sides, and a train behind. The Curate officiously repeated, "Come, come, keep back, keep off; fye! fye!" Federigo, however, forbade him; "Let them alone, let them alone;" and he walked on, now raising his hand to bless the people, now lowering it to fondle the children, who gathered round his feet. In this way they reached the house, and entered, the crowd hedging round the door outside. In this crowd the tailor also found himself, having followed behind, like the rest, with eager eyes and open mouth, not knowing whither they were going. When he saw, however, this unexpected *whither*, he forced the throng to make way, it may be imagined with what bustle, crying over and over again, "Make way for one who has a right to pass;" and so went into the house.

Agnese and Lucia heard an increasing murmur in the street, and while wondering what it could be, saw the door thrown open, and admit the purple-clad prelate, and the priest of the parish.

"Is this she?" demanded Federigo of the Curate; and on receiving a sign in the affirmative, he advanced towards Lucia, who was holding back with her mother, both of them motionless, and mute with surprise and bashfulness; but the tone of his voice, the countenance, the behaviour, and, above all, the words of Federigo, quickly re-animated them. "Poor girl," he began, "God has permitted you to be put to a great trial; but He has surely shown you that His eye was still over you, that He had not forgotten you. He has restored you in safety, and has made use of you for a great work, to show infinite mercy to one, and to relieve, at the same time, many others."

Here the mistress of the house came into the apartment, who, at the bustle outside, had gone to the window upstairs, and seeing who was entering the house, hastily ran down, after slightly arranging her dress; and almost



at the same moment the tailor made his appearance at another door. Seeing their guests engaged in conversation, they quietly withdrew into one corner, and waited there with profound respect. The Cardinal, having courteously saluted them, continued to talk to the women, mingling with his words of comfort many inquiries, thinking he might possibly gather from their replies some way of doing good to one who had undergone so much suffering.

"It would be well if all priests were like your Lordship, if they would sometimes take the part of the poor, and not help to put them into difficulties to get themselves out," said Agnese, emboldened by the kind and affable behaviour of Federigo, and annoyed at the thought that the Signor Don Abbondio, after having sacrificed others on every occasion, should now even attempt to forbid their giving vent to their feelings, and complaining to one who was set in authority over him, when, by an unusual chance, the occasion for doing so presented itself.

"Just say all that you think," said the Cardinal: "speak freely."

"I mean to say, that if our Signor Curate had done his duty, things wouldn't have gone as they have."

But the Cardinal renewing his request that she should explain herself more fully, she began to feel rather perplexed at having to relate a story in which she, too, had borne a part she did not care to make known, especially to such a man. However, she contrived to manage it, with the help of a little curtailings. She related the intended match, and the refusal of Don Abbondio; nor was she silent on the pretext of *the superiors* which he had brought forward (ah, Agnese!); and then she skipped on to Don Rodrigo's attempt, and how, having been warned of it, they had been able to make their escape. "But indeed," added she, in conclusion, "we



only escaped to be again caught in the snare. If instead, the Signor Curate had honestly told us the whole, and had immediately married my poor children, we would have gone away altogether directly, privately, and far enough off, to a place where not even the wind would have known us. But, in this way, time was lost; and now has happened what has happened."

"The Signor Curate shall render me an account of this matter," said the Cardinal.

"Oh no, Signor, no!" replied Agnese: "I didn't speak on that account: don't scold him; for what is done, is done; and, besides, it will do no good; it is his nature; and on another occasion he would do just the same."

But Lucia, dissatisfied with this way of relating the story, added: "We have also done wrong: it shows it was not the Lord's will that the plan should succeed."

"What can you have done wrong, my poor girl?" asked Federigo.

And, in spite of the threatening glances which her mother tried to give her secretly, Lucia, in her turn, related the history of their attempt in Don Abbondio's house; and concluded by saying, "We have done wrong, and God has punished us for it."

"Take, as from His hand, the sufferings you have undergone, and be of good courage," said Federigo; "for who has reason to rejoice and be hopeful, but those who have suffered, and are ready to accuse themselves?"

He then asked where was the Betrothed; and hearing from Agnese (Lucia stood silent, with her head bent, and downcast eyes) how he had been outlawed, he felt and expressed surprise and dissatisfaction, and asked why it was.

Agnese stammered out what little she knew of Renzo's history.

"I have heard speak of this youth," said the Cardinal;



"but how happens it that a man involved in affairs of this sort is in treaty of marriage with this young girl?"

"He was a worthy youth," said Lucia, blushing, but in a firm voice.

"He was even too quiet a lad," added Agnese; "and you may ask this of any body you like, even of the Signor Curate. Who knows what confusion they may have made down there, what intrigues? It takes little to make poor people seem rogues."

"Indeed, it's too true," said the Cardinal; "I'll certainly make inquiries about him;" and learning the name and residence of the youth, he made a memorandum of them on his tablets. He added, that he expected to be at their village in a few days, that then Lucia might go thither without fear, and that, in the meanwhile, he would think about providing her some secure retreat, till everything was arranged for the best.

Then, turning to the master and mistress of the house, who immediately came forward, he renewed the acknowledgments which he had already conveyed through the priest of the parish, and asked them whether they were willing to receive, for a few days, the guests which God had sent them.

"Oh yes, sir!" replied the woman, in a tone of voice and with a look which meant much more than the bare words seemed to express. But her husband, quite excited by the presence of such an interrogator, and by the wish to do him honour on so important an occasion, anxiously sought for some fine reply. He wrinkled his forehead, strained and squinted with his eyes, compressed his lips, stretched his intellect to its utmost extent, strove, fumbled about in his mind, and there found an overwhelming medley of unfinished ideas and half-formed words: but time pressed; the Cardinal signified that he had already interpreted his silence; the poor man opened his mouth, and pronounced the



words, "You may imagine!" At this point not another word would occur to him. This failure not only disheartened and vexed him at the moment, but the tormenting remembrance ever after spoiled his complacency in the great honour he had received. And how often, in thinking it over, and fancying himself again in the same circumstances, did numberless words crowd upon his mind, as it were, out of spite, any of which would have been better than that silly *You may imagine!* But are not the very ditches full of wisdom—too late!

The Cardinal took his leave, saying, "The blessing of God be upon this house."

The same evening he asked the Curate in what way he could best compensate to the tailor, who certainly could not be rich, for the expenses he must have incurred, especially in these times, by his hospitality. The Curate replied, that, in truth, neither the profits of his business, nor the produce of some small fields which the good tailor owned, would be enough this year to allow of his being liberal to others; but that, having laid by a little in the preceding years, he was among the most easy in circumstances in the neighbourhood, and could afford to do a kindness without inconvenience, as he certainly would with all his heart; and that, under any circumstances, he would deem it an insult to be offered money in compensation.

"He will, probably," said the Cardinal, "have demands on people unable to pay."

"You may judge yourself, my most illustrious Lord: these poor people pay from the overplus of the harvest. Last year there was no overplus; and this one, everybody falls short of absolute necessities."

"Very well," replied Federigo, "I will take all these debts upon myself; and you will do me the pleasure of getting from him a list of the sums, and discharging them for me."



"It will be a tolerable sum."

"So much the better: and you will have, I dare say, many more wretched, and almost destitute of clothing, who have no debts, because they can get no credit."

"Alas! too many! One does what one can; but how can we supply all in times like these?"

"Tell him to clothe them at my expense, and pay him well. Really, this year, all that does not go for bread seems a kind of robbery; but this is a particular case."

We cannot close the history of this day, without briefly relating how the Unnamed concluded it.

This time the report of his conversion had preceded him in the valley, and quickly spreading throughout it, had excited among all the inhabitants consternation, anxiety, and angry whisperings. To the first bravoës or servants (it mattered not which) whom he met, he made signs that they should follow him; and so on, on either hand. All fell behind with unusual perplexity of mind, but with their accustomed submission: so that, with a continually-increasing train, he at length reached the Castle. He beckoned to those who were loitering about the gate to follow him with the others; entered the first court, went towards the middle, and here, seated all the while on his saddle, uttered one of his thundering calls: it was the accustomed signal at which all his dependents, who were within hearing, immediately flocked towards him. In a moment, all those who were scattered throughout the Castle attended to the summons, and mingled with the already assembled party, gazing eagerly at their master.

"Go, and wait for me in the great hall," said he; and, from his higher station on horseback, he watched them all move off. He then dismounted, led the animal to the stables himself, and repaired to the room where he was expected. On his appearance, a loud whispering



was instantly hushed, and retiring to one side, they left a large space in the hall quite clear for him : there may have been, perhaps, about thirty.

The Unnamed raised his hand, as if to preserve the silence his presence had already created, raised his head, which towered above all those of the assemblage, and said : " Listen, all of you, and let no one speak unless I bid him. My friends ! the path we have hitherto followed leads to the depths of hell. I do not mean to upbraid you, I, who have been foremost of you all, the worst of all ; but listen to what I have to say. The merciful God has called me to change my life ; and I will change it, I have already changed it : so may He do with you all ! Know, then, and hold it for certain, that I am resolved rather to die than to do anything more against His holy laws. I revoke all the wicked commands you may any of you have received from me ; you understand me ; indeed, I command you not to do anything I have before commanded. And hold it equally certain, that no one, from this time forward, shall do evil with my sanction, in my service. He who will remain with me under these conditions shall be to me as a son : and I shall feel happy at the close of that day in which I shall not have eaten, that I may supply the last of you with the last loaf I have left in the house. He who does not wish to remain, shall receive what is due of his salary, and an additional gift : he may go away, but must never again set foot here, unless it be to change his life ; for this purpose he shall always be received with open arms. Think about it to-night : to-morrow morning I will ask you one by one for your reply, and will then give you new orders. For the present retire, every one to his post. And God, who has exercised such mercy towards me, incline you to good resolutions ! "

. Here he ceased, and all continued silent. How various



and tumultuous soever might be the thoughts at work in their hardened minds, they gave no outward demonstration of emotion. They were accustomed to receive the voice of their master as the declaration of a will from which there was no appeal: and that voice, announcing that the will was changed, in no wise denoted that it was enfeebled. It never crossed the mind of one of them that, because he was converted, they might therefore assume over him, and reply to him as to another man. They beheld in him a saint, but one of those saints who are depicted with a lofty brow, and a sword in their hands. Besides the fear he inspired, they also entertained for him (especially those born in his service, and they were a large proportion) the affection of subjects; they had all, besides, a kindly feeling of admiration for him, and experienced in his presence a species of, I will even say, modest humility, such as the rudest and most wanton spirits feel before an authority which they have once recognised. Again, the things they had just heard from his lips were doubtless odious to their ears, but neither false, nor entirely alien to their understandings: if they had a thousand times ridiculed them, it was not because they disbelieved them; but to obviate, by ridicule, the fear which any serious consideration of them would have awakened. And now, on seeing the effect of this fear on a mind like that of their master, there was not one who did not either more or less sympathize with him, at least for a little while. In addition to all this, those among them who had first heard the grand news beyond the valley, had at the same time witnessed and related the joy, the exultation of the people, the new favour with which the Unnamed was regarded, and the veneration so suddenly exchanged for their former hatred—their former terror. So that in the man whom they had always regarded, so to say, as a superior being, even while they, in a great measure, themselves



constituted his strength, they now beheld the wonder, the idol of a multitude; they beheld him exalted above others, in a different, but not less real, manner; ever above the common throng, ever at the head. They stood now confounded, uncertain one of another, and each one of himself. Some murmured; some began to plan whither they could go to find shelter and employment; some questioned with themselves whether they could make up their minds to become honest men; some even, moved by his words, felt a sort of inclination to do so; others, without resolving upon anything, proposed to promise everything readily, to remain in the meanwhile where they could share the loaf so willingly offered, and in those days so scarce, and thus gain time for decision: no one, however, uttered a syllable. And when, at the close of his speech, the Unnamed again raised his authoritative hand, and beckoned to them to disperse, they all moved off in the direction of the door as quietly as a flock of sheep. He followed them out, and placing himself in the middle of the court-yard, stood to watch them by the dim evening light, as they separated from each other, and repaired to their several posts. Then, returning to fetch a lantern, he again traversed the courts, corridors, and halls, visited every entrance, and, after seeing that all was quiet, at length retired to sleep. Yes, to sleep, because he was sleepy.

Never, though he had always industriously courted them, had he, in any conjuncture, been so overburdened with intricate, and at the same time urgent, affairs, as at the present moment: yet he was sleepy. The remorse, which had robbed him of rest the night before, was not only unsubdued, but even spoke more loudly, more sternly, more absolutely: yet he was sleepy. The order, the kind of government established by him in that Castle for so many years, with so much care, and such a singular union of rashness and perseverance, he had now



himself overturned by a few words; the unlimited devotion of his dependents, their readiness for any undertaking, their ruffian-like fidelity, on which he had long been accustomed to depend, — these he had himself shaken; his various engagements had become a tissue of perplexities; he had brought confusion and uncertainty into his household: yet he was sleepy.

He went, therefore, into his chamber, approached that bed, which, the night before, he had found such a thorny couch, and knelt down at its side with the intention of praying. He found, in fact, in a deep and hidden corner of his mind, the prayers he had been taught to repeat as a child; he began to recite them, and the words so long wrapped up, as it were, together, flowed one after another, as if emerging once more to light. He experienced in this act a mixture of undefined feelings; a kind of soothing pleasure, in this actual return to the habits of innocent childhood; a doubly-bitter contrition at the thought of the gulf that he had placed between those former days and the present; an ardent desire to attain, by works of expiation, a clearer conscience, a state more nearly resembling that of innocence, to which he could never return; together with a feeling of deep gratitude, and of confidence in that mercy which could lead him towards it, and had already given so many tokens of willingness to do so. Then, rising from his knees, he lay down, and was quickly wrapt in sleep.

Thus ended a day still so much celebrated when our anonymous author wrote: a day of which, had he not written, nothing would have been known, at least nothing of the particulars; for Ripamonti and Rivola, whom we have quoted above, merely record that, after an interview with Federigo, this remarkable tyrant wonderfully changed his course of life, and for ever. And how few are there who have read the works of



these authors! Fewer still are there who will read this of ours. And who knows whether in the valley itself, if any one had the inclination to seek, and the ability to find it, there now remains the smallest trace, the most confused tradition, of such an event? So many things have taken place since that time!







## CHAPTER XXV.

**N**EXT day, there was no one spoken of in Lucia's village, and throughout the whole territory of Lecco, but herself, the Unnamed, the Archbishop, and one other person, who, however ambitious to have his name in men's mouths, would willingly, on this occasion, have dispensed with the honour : we mean the Signor Don Rodrigo.

Not that his doings had not before been talked about ; but they were detached, secret conversations ; and that man must have been very well acquainted with his neighbour who would have ventured to discourse with him freely on such a subject. Nay, people did not even exercise those feelings on the subject of which they were capable ; for, generally speaking, when men cannot give vent to their indignation without imminent danger, they not only show less than they feel, or disguise it entirely, but they feel less in reality. But now, who could refrain from inquiring and reasoning about so notorious an event, in which the hand of Heaven had been seen, and



in which two such personages bore a conspicuous part? One, in whom such a spirited love of justice was united to so much authority; the other, who, with all his boldness, had been induced, as it were, to lay down his arms, and submit. By the side of these rivals, Don Rodrigo looked rather insignificant. Now, all understood what it was to torment innocence with the wish to dishonour it; to persecute it with such insolent perseverance, with such atrocious violence, with such abominable treachery. They reviewed, on this occasion, all the other feats of the Signor, and said what they thought about all, each one being emboldened by finding everybody else of the same opinion. There were whisperings, and general murmurs; cautiously uttered, however, on account of the numberless bravoës he had around him.

A large share of public animadversion fell also upon his friends and flatterers. They said of the Signor Podestà what he richly deserved, always deaf, and blind, and dumb, on the doings of this tyrant; but this also cautiously; for the Podestà had bailiffs. With the Doctor *Azzecca-Garbugli*, who had no weapons but gossiping and cabals, and with other flatterers like himself, they did not use so much ceremony; these were pointed at, and regarded with very contemptuous and suspicious glances, so that, for some time, they judged it expedient to keep as much within doors as possible.

Don Rodrigo, astounded at this unlooked-for news, so different to the tidings he had expected day after day, and hour after hour, remained ensconced in his den-like palace, with no one to keep him company but his bravoës, devouring his rage, for two days, and on the third set off for Milan. Had there been nothing else but the murmuring of the people, perhaps, since things had gone so far, he would have stayed on purpose to face it, or even to seek an opportunity of making



an example to others of one of the most daring ; but the certain intelligence that the Cardinal was coming into the neighbourhood fairly drove him away. The Count, his uncle, who knew nothing of the story but what he had been told by Attilio, would certainly expect that, on such an occasion, Don Rodrigo should be the first to wait upon the Cardinal, and receive from him in public the most distinguished reception : every one must see how he was on the road to this consummation ! The Count expected it, and would have required a minute account of the visit ; for it was an important opportunity of showing in what esteem his family was held by one of the head powers. To extricate himself from so odious a dilemma, Don Rodrigo, rising one morning before the sun, threw himself into his carriage, Griso and some other braves outside, both in front and behind ; and leaving orders that the rest of his household should follow him, took his departure, like a fugitive—like, (it will, perhaps, be allowed us to exalt our characters by so illustrious a comparison)—like Catiline from Rome, fretting and fuming, and swearing to return very shortly in a different guise to execute his vengeance.

In the meanwhile, the Cardinal proceeded on his visitation among the parishes in the territory of Lecco, taking one each day. On the day in which he was to arrive at Lucia's village, a large part of the inhabitants were early on the road to meet him. At the entrance of the village, close by the cottage of our two poor women, was erected a triumphal arch, constructed of upright stakes, and poles laid cross-wise, covered with straw and moss, and ornamented with green boughs of holly, distinguishable by its scarlet berries, and other shrubs. The front of the church was adorned with tapestry ; from every window-ledge hung extended quilts and sheets, and infants' swaddling-clothes, disposed like



drapery ; in short, all the few necessary articles which could be converted, either badly or otherwise, into the appearance of something superfluous. Towards evening, (the hour at which Federigo usually arrived at the church, on his visitation-tours,) all who had remained within doors, old men, women, and children, for the most part, set off to meet him, some in procession, some in groups, headed by Don Abbondio, who, in the midst of the rejoicing, looked disconsolate enough, both from the stunning noise of the crowd, and the continual hurrying to and fro of the people, which, as he himself expressed it, quite dimmed his sight, together with a secret apprehension that the women might have been *babbling*, and that he would be called upon to render an account of the wedding.

At length the Cardinal came in sight, or, to speak more correctly, the crowd in the midst of which he was carried in his litter, surrounded by his attendants ; for nothing could be distinguished of his whole party, but a signal towering in the air above the heads of the people, part of the cross, which was borne by the chaplain, mounted upon his mule. The crowd, which was advancing with Don Abbondio, hurried forward in a disorderly manner to join the approaching party ; while he, after ejaculating three or four times, " Gently ; in procession ; what are you doing ? " turned back in vexation, and muttering to himself, " It's a perfect Babel, it's a perfect Babel," went to take refuge in the church until they had dispersed ; and here he awaited the Cardinal.

The holy prelate in the meanwhile advanced slowly, bestowing benedictions with his hand, and receiving them from the mouths of the multitude, while his followers had enough to do to keep their places behind him. As Lucia's countrymen, the villagers were anxious to receive the Archbishop with more than ordinary



honours, but this was no easy matter ; for it had long been customary, wherever he went, for all to do the most they could. At the very beginning of his episcopate, on his first solemn entry into the cathedral, the rush and crowding of the populace upon him were such as to excite fears for his life ; and some of the gentlemen who were nearest to him, had actually drawn their swords to terrify and repulse the press. Such were their violent and uncouth manners, that even in making demonstrations of kindly feeling to a bishop in church, and attempting to regulate them, it was necessary almost to have recourse to bloodshed. And that defence would not, perhaps, have proved sufficient, had not two priests, strong in body, and bold in spirit, raised him in their arms, and carried him at once from the door of the temple to the very foot of the high altar. From that time forward, in the many episcopal visits he had to make, his first entrance into the church might, without joking, be reckoned among his pastoral labours, and sometimes even among the dangers he had incurred.

On this occasion, he entered as he best could, went up to the altar, and thence, after a short prayer, addressed, as was his custom, a few words to his auditors, on his affection for them, his desire for their salvation, and the way in which they ought to prepare themselves for the services of the morrow. Then retiring to the parsonage, among many other things he had to consult about with the Curate, he questioned him as to the character and conduct of Renzo. Don Abbondio said that he was rather a brisk, obstinate, hot-headed fellow. But, on more particular and precise interrogations, he was obliged to admit that he was a worthy youth, and that he himself could not understand how he could have played all the mischievous tricks at Milan, which had been reported of him.

“ And about the young girl,” resumed the Cardinal ;



“do you think she may now return in security to her own home?”

“For the present,” replied Don Abbondio, “she might come and be as safe—the present, I say—as she wishes; but,” added he with a sigh, “your illustrious Lordship ought to be always here, or, at least, near at hand.”

“The Lord is always near,” said the Cardinal: “as to the rest, I will think about placing her in safety.” And he hastily gave orders that, next morning, early, a litter should be despatched, with an attendant, to fetch the two women.

Don Abbondio came out from the interview quite delighted that the Cardinal had talked to him about the two young people, without requiring an account of his refusal to marry them.—Then he knows nothing about it,—said he to himself:—Agnese has held her tongue. Wonderful! They have to see him again; but I will give them further instructions, that I will.—He knew not, poor man, that Federigo had not entered upon the discussion, just because he intended to speak to him about it more at length when they were disengaged; and that he wished, before giving him what he deserved, to hear his side of the question.

But the intentions of the good prelate for the safe placing of Lucia had, in the meanwhile, been rendered unnecessary: after he had left her, other circumstances had occurred which we will now proceed to relate.

The two women, during the few days which they had to pass in the tailor's hospitable dwelling, had resumed, as far as they could, each her former and accustomed manner of living. Lucia had very soon begged some employment; and, as at the monastery, diligently plied her needle in a small retired room shut out from the gaze of the people. Agnese occasionally went abroad, and at other times sat sewing with her daughter. Their con-



versations were more melancholy, as well as more affectionate; both were prepared for a separation; since the lamb could not return to dwell so near the wolf's den: and when and what would be the end of this separation? The future was dark, inextricable; for one of them in particular. Agnese, nevertheless, indulged in her own mind many cheerful anticipations, that Renzo, if nothing evil had happened to him, would, sooner or later, send some news of himself, and if he had found some employment to which he could settle, if (and how could it be doubted?) he still intended to keep faith with Lucia; why could they not go and live with him? With such hopes she often entertained her daughter, who found it, it is difficult to say, whether more mournful to listen to them, or painful to reply. Her great secret she had always kept to herself; and uneasy, certainly, at concealing anything from so good a mother, yet restrained, invincibly as it were, by shame, and the different fears we have before mentioned, she went from day to day without speaking. Her designs were very different from those of her mother, or rather, she had no designs; she had entirely given herself up to Providence. She always therefore endeavoured to divert or let drop the conversation; or else said, in general terms, that she had no longer any hope or desire for anything in this world except to be soon restored to her mother; more frequently, however, tears came opportunely instead of words.

"Do you know why it appears so to you?" said Agnese; "because you've suffered so much, and it doesn't seem possible that it can turn out for good to you. But leave it to God; and if . . . . Let a ray come, but *one* ray; and then *I* know whether you will always care about nothing." Lucia kissed her mother, and wept.

Besides this, a great friendship quickly sprang up between them and their guests: where, indeed, should



it exist, unless between benefactors and the benefited, when both one and the other are worthy, good people? Agnese, particularly, had many long chats with the mistress of the house. The tailor, too, gave them a little amusement with his stories and moral discourses: and, at dinner especially, had always some wonderful anecdote to relate of Buovo d'Antona, or the Fathers of the Desert.

A few miles from this village resided, at their country-house, a couple of some importance, Don Ferrante and Donna Prassede: their family, as usual, is unnamed by our anonymous author. Donna Prassede was an old lady, very much inclined to do good, the most praiseworthy employment, certainly, that a person can undertake; but which, like every other, can be too easily abused. To do good, we must know how to do it; and, like everything else, we can only know this through the medium of our own passions, our own judgment, our own ideas; which not unfrequently are rather as correct as they are capable of being, than as they ought to be. Donna Prassede acted towards her ideas as it is said one ought to do towards one's friends; she had few of them; but to those few she was very much attached. Among the few, there were, unfortunately, many distorted ones; nor was it these she loved the least. Hence it happened, either that she proposed to herself as a good end what was not such in reality, or employed means which would rather produce an opposite effect, or thought them allowable when they were not at all so, from a certain vague supposition, that he who does more than his duty, may also go beyond his right; it happened that she could not see in an event what was actually there, or did see what was not there; and many other similar things, which may and do happen to all, not excepting the best; but to Donna Prassede far too often, and, not unfrequently, all at once.



On hearing Lucia's wonderful case, and all that was reported on this occasion of the young girl, she felt a great curiosity to see her, and sent a carriage, with an aged attendant, to fetch both mother and daughter. The latter shrugged her shoulders, and besought the tailor, who was the bearer of the message, to find some sort of excuse for her. So long as it only related to the common people, who tried to make acquaintance with the young girl who had been the subject of a miracle, the tailor had willingly rendered her that service; but in this instance, resistance seemed in his eyes a kind of rebellion. He made so many faces, uttered so many exclamations, used so many arguments—"that it wasn't customary to do so, and that it was a grand house, and that one shouldn't say 'No' to great people, and that it might be the making of their fortune, and that the Signora Donna Prassede, besides all the rest, was a saint too!"—in short, so many things, that Lucia was obliged to give way: more especially, as Agnese confirmed all these reasonings with a corresponding number of ejaculations: "Certainly, surely."

Arrived in the lady's presence, she received them with much courtesy and numberless congratulations; questioning and advising them with a kind of almost innate superiority, but corrected by so many humble expressions, tempered by so much interest in their behalf, and sweetened with so many expressions of piety, that Agnese, almost immediately, and Lucia, not long afterwards, began to feel relieved from the oppressive sense of awe with which the presence of such a lady had inspired them; nay, they even found something attractive in it. In short, hearing that the Cardinal had undertaken to find Lucia a place of retreat, and urged by a desire to second, and, at the same time, anticipate his good intention, Donna Prassede proposed to take the young girl into her own house, where no other services would



be required of her than the use of her needle, scissors, and spindle; adding, that she would take upon herself the charge of informing his Lordship.

Beyond the obvious and immediate good in this work, Donna Prassede saw in it, and proposed to herself another, perhaps a more considerable one in her ideas, that of directing a young mind, and of bringing into the right way one who greatly needed it; for, from the first moment she had heard Lucia mentioned, she became instantly persuaded, that, in a young girl who could have promised herself to a scoundrel, a villain, in short, a scape-gallows, there must be some fault, some hidden wickedness lurking within: *Tell me what company you keep, and I'll tell you what you are.* Lucia's visit had confirmed this persuasion: not that, on the whole, as the saying is, she did not seem to Donna Prassede a good girl; but there were many things to favour the idea. That head hung down till her chin was buried in her neck; her not replying at all, or only in broken sentences, as if by constraint, might indicate modesty; but they undoubtedly denoted a great deal of wilfulness: it did not require much discernment to discover that that young brain had its own thoughts on the subject. And those blushes every moment, and those suppressed sighs . . . Two such eyes, too, which did not please Donna Prassede at all. She held it for certain, as if she knew it on good grounds, that all Lucia's misfortunes were a chastisement from Heaven for her attachment to a rascal, and a warning to her to give him up entirely; and these premises being laid down, she proposed to co-operate towards so good an end. Because, as she often said both to herself and others, she made it her object to second the will of Heaven: but she often fell into the terrible misconception of taking for the will of Heaven the fancies of her own brain. However, she took care not to give the least hint of the



second intention we have named. It was one of her maxims, that, to bring a good design to a successful issue, the first requisite, in the greater number of instances, is not to let it be discovered.

The mother and daughter looked at each other. Considering the mournful necessity of their separating, the offer seemed to both of them most acceptable, when they had no choice for it, on account of the vicinity of the residence to their village, whither, let the worst come to the worst, they would return, and be able to meet at the approaching festivity. Seeing assent exhibited in each other's eyes, they both turned to Donna Prassede with such acknowledgments as expressed their acceptance of the proposal. She renewed her kind affability and promises, and said that they should shortly have a letter to present to his Lordship. After the women had taken their departure, she got Don Ferrante to compose the letter. He, being a learned person, as we shall hereafter relate more particularly, was always employed by her as secretary on occasions of importance. On one of such magnitude as this, Don Ferrante exerted his utmost stretch of ingenuity; and on delivering the rough draught to his partner to copy, warmly recommended the orthography to her notice; this being one of the many things he had studied, and the few over which he had any command in the house. Donna Prassede copied it very diligently, and then despatched the letter to the tailor's. This was two or three days before the Cardinal sent the litter to convey the two women home.

Arriving at the village before the Cardinal had gone to church, they alighted at the curate's house. There was an order to admit them immediately: the chaplain, who was the first to see them, executed the order, only detaining them so long as was necessary to school them very hastily in the ceremonials they ought to observe.



towards his lordship, and the titles by which they should address him, his usual practice whenever he could effect it unknown to his Grace. It was a continual annoyance to the poor man to see the little ceremony that was used towards the Cardinal in this particular. "All," said he to the rest of the household, "through the excess of kindness of that saintly man—from his great familiarity." And then he related how, with his own ears, he had more than once even heard the reply: "*Yes, sir,*" and "*No, sir.*"

The Cardinal was, at this moment, busily talking with Don Abbondio on some parish matters: so that the latter had not the desired opportunity of giving *his* instructions also to the women. He could only bestow upon them in passing, as he withdrew and they came forward, a glance, which meant to say how well-pleased he was with them, and conjuring them, like good creatures, to continue silent.

After the first kind greetings on one hand, and the first reverent salutations on the other, Agnese drew the letter from her bosom, and handed it to the Cardinal, saying: "It is from the Signora Donna Prassede, who says, she knows your most illustrious Lordship well, my Lord; it's natural enough, among such great people, that they should know each other. When you have read it, you'll see."

"Very well," said Federigo, when he had read the letter, and extracted the honey from Don Ferrante's flowers of rhetoric. He knew the family well enough to feel certain that Lucia had been invited thither with good intentions, and that there she would be secure from the machinations and violence of her persecutor. What opinion he entertained of Donna Prassede's head, we have no positive information. Probably she was not the person whom he would have chosen for such a purpose; but, as we have said, or hinted, elsewhere, it was



not his custom to undo arrangements made by those whose duty it was to make them, that he might do them over again better.

"Take this separation also, and the uncertainty in which you are placed, calmly," added he: "trust that it will soon be over, and that God will bring matters to that end to which He seems to have directed them; but rest assured, that whatever He wills shall happen, will be the best for you." To Lucia, in particular, he gave some further kind advice; another word or two of comfort to both; and then, bestowing on them his blessing, he let them go. At the street-door they found themselves surrounded by a crowd of friends of both sexes, the whole population, we may almost say, who were waiting for them, and who conducted them home, as in triumph. Among the women, there was quite a rivalry in congratulations, sympathy, and inquiries; and all exclaimed with dissatisfaction, on hearing that Lucia would leave them the next day. The men vied with each other in offering their services;—every one wished to keep guard at the cottage for that night. Upon this fact, our anonymous author thinks fit to ground a proverb: *Would you have many ready to help you? be sure not to need them.*

So many welcomes confounded and almost stunned Lucia; though, on the whole, they did her good, by somewhat distracting her mind from those thoughts and recollections which, even in the midst of the bustle and excitement, rose only too readily on crossing that threshold, on entering those rooms, at the sight of every object.

When the bells began to ring, announcing the approach of the hour for Divine service, everybody moved towards the church, and, to our newly-retained friends, it was a second triumphal march.

Service being over, Don Abbondio, who had hastened



forward to see if Perpetua had everything well arranged for dinner, was informed that the Cardinal wished to speak with him. He went immediately to his noble guest's apartment, who, waiting till he drew near; "Signor Curate," he began—and these words were uttered in such a way as to convey the idea, that they were the preface to a long and serious conversation—"Signor Curate, why did you not unite in marriage this Lucia with her betrothed husband?"

—Those people have emptied the sack this morning, —thought Don Abbondio, as he stammered forth in reply,—“Your most illustrious Lordship will, doubtless, have heard speak of the confusions which have arisen out of this affair: it has all been so intricate, that, to this very day, one cannot see one's way clearly in it: as your illustrious Lordship may yourself conclude from this, that the young girl is here, after so many accidents, as it were by miracle; and that the bridegroom, after other accidents, is nobody knows where.”

“I ask,” replied the Cardinal, “whether it is true that, before all these circumstances took place, you refused to celebrate the marriage, when you were requested to do so, on the appointed day; and if so, why?”

“Really . . . if your illustrious Lordship knew . . . what intimations . . . what terrible injunctions I have received not to speak . . .” And he paused, without concluding, with a certain manner intended respectfully to insinuate, that it would be indiscreet to wish to know more.

“But,” said the Cardinal, with a voice and look much more serious than usual, “it is your Bishop who, for his own duty's sake, and for your justification, wishes to learn from you why you have not done what, in your regular duties, you were bound to do?”

“My Lord,” said Don Abbondio, shrinking almost into a nut-shell, “I did not like to say before . . . But



it seemed to me that, things being so entangled, so long gone by, and now irremediable, it was useless to bring them up again . . . . However—however, I say, I know your illustrious Lordship will not betray one of your poor priests. For you see, my Lord; your illustrious Lordship cannot be everywhere at once; and I remain here exposed . . . . But, when you command it, I will tell you . . . . I will tell you all.”

“Tell me: I only wish to find you free from blame.”

Don Abbondio then began to relate the doleful history; but suppressing the principal name, he merely substituted *a great Signor*; thus giving to prudence the little that he could in such an emergency.

“And you had no other motive?” asked the Cardinal, having attentively heard the whole.

“Perhaps I have not sufficiently explained myself,” replied Don Abbondio. “I was prohibited, under pain of death, to perform this marriage.”

“And does this appear to you a sufficient reason for omitting a positive duty?”

“I have always endeavoured to do my duty, even at very great inconvenience; but when one’s life is concerned . . . .”

“And when you presented yourself to the church,” said Federigo, in a still more solemn tone, “to receive Holy Orders, did she caution you about your life? Did she tell you that the duties belonging to the ministry were free from every obstacle, exempt from every danger? or did she tell you that where danger begins, there duty would end? Did she not expressly say the contrary? Did she not warn you, that she sent you forth as a sheep among wolves? Did you not know that there are violent oppressors, to whom what you are commanded to perform would be displeasing? He from whom we have received teaching and example, in imitation of whom we suffer ourselves to be called, and



call ourselves, shepherds; when He descended upon earth to execute His office, did He lay down as a condition the safety of His life? And to save it, to preserve it, I say, a few days longer upon earth, at the expense of charity and duty, did he institute the holy unction, the imposition of hands, the gift of the priesthood? Leave it to the world to teach this virtue, to advocate this doctrine. What do I say? Oh, shame! the world itself rejects it: the world also makes its own laws, which fix the limits of good and evil; it, too, has its gospel, a gospel of pride and hatred; and it will not have it said that the love of life is a reason for transgressing its precepts. It will not, and it is obeyed. And we! children and proclaimers of the promise! What would the Church be, if such language as yours were that of all your brethren? Where would she be, had she appeared in the world with these doctrines?"

Don Abbondio hung his head. His mind, during these arguments, was like a chicken in the talons of a hawk, which holds its prey elevated to an unknown region, to an atmosphere it has never before breathed. Finding that he must make some reply, he said in an unconvinced tone of submission, "My Lord, I shall be to blame. When one is not to consider one's life, I don't know what to say. But when one has to do with some people, people who possess power, and won't hear reason, I don't see what is to be gained by it, even if one were willing to play the bravo. This Signor is one whom it is impossible either to conquer, or win over."

"And don't you know that suffering for righteousness' sake is our conquest? If you know not this, what do you preach? What are you teacher of? What is the *good news* you announce to the poor? Who requires from you that you should conquer force by force? Surely you will not one day be asked, if you were able to overcome the powerful; for for this purpose neither



your mission nor rule was given to you. But you will assuredly be demanded, whether you employed the means you possessed to do what was required of you, even when they had the temerity to prohibit you."

—These saints are very odd,—thought Don Abbondio meanwhile:—in substance, to extract the plain meaning, he has more at heart the affections of two young people than the life of a poor priest.—And, as to himself, he would have been very well satisfied had the conversation ended here; but he saw the Cardinal, at every pause, wait with the air of one who expects a reply, a confession, or an apology,—in short, something.

"I repeat, my Lord," answered he, therefore, "that I shall be to blame . . . One can't give one's self courage."

"And why then, I might ask you, did you undertake an office which binds upon you a continual warfare with the passions of the world? But I will rather say, how is it you do not remember that, if in this ministry, however you may have been placed there, courage is necessary to fulfil your obligations, there is One who will infallibly bestow it upon you, when you ask Him? Think you all the millions of martyrs naturally possessed courage? that they naturally held life in contempt? So many young persons, just beginning to enjoy it—so many aged ones, accustomed to regret that it is so near its end—so many children—so many mothers? All possessed courage, because courage was necessary, and they relied upon God. Knowing your own weakness, and the duties to which you were called, have you ever thought of preparing yourself for the difficult circumstances in which you might be placed, in which you actually are placed at present? Ah! if for so many years of pastoral labours you have loved your flock (and how could you *not* love them?)—if you have placed in them your affections, your cares, your



happiness, courage ought not to fail you in the moment of need: love is intrepid. Now, surely, if you loved those who have been committed to your spiritual care, those whom you call children, when you saw two of them threatened, as well as yourself, ah, surely! as the weakness of the flesh made you tremble for yourself, so love would have made you tremble for them. You would feel humbled for your former fears, as the effect of your corrupt nature; you would have implored strength to overcome them, to expel them as a temptation. But a holy and noble fear for others, for your children, this you would have listened to; this would have given you no peace; this would have incited—constrained you to think and do all you could to avert the dangers that threatened them . . . . With what has this fear, this love inspired you? What have you done for them? What have you thought for them?"

And he ceased, in token of expectation.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

**A**T such a question, Don Abbondio, who had been studying to find some reply in the least precise terms possible, stood without uttering a word. And, to speak the truth, even we, with the manuscript before us, and pen in hand, having nothing to contend with but words, nor anything to fear but the criticisms of our readers, even we, I say, feel a kind of repugnance in proceeding; we feel somewhat strange in thus setting forth, with so little trouble, such admirable precepts of fortitude and charity, of active solicitude for others, and unlimited sacrifice of self. But remembering that these things were said by one who also practised them, we will confidently proceed.

“You give me no answer!” resumed the Cardinal. “Ah, if you had done, on your part, what charity and duty required of you, however things had turned out, you would now have something to answer! You see, then, yourself, what you have done. You have obeyed the voice of Iniquity, unmindful of the requirements of duty. You have obeyed her punctually: she showed herself to you to signify her desire; but she wished to remain concealed from those who could have sheltered themselves from her reach, and been on their guard against her; she did not wish to resort to arms, she desired secrecy, to mature her designs of treachery and



force at leisure ; she required of you transgression and silence. You have transgressed, and kept silence. I ask you, now, whether you have not done more?—you will tell me whether it be true that you alleged false pretexts for your refusal, that you might not reveal the true motive.” And he paused awhile, awaiting a reply.

—The tell-tales have reported this too,—thought Don Abbondio ; but as he gave no token in words of having anything to say, the Cardinal continued : “ If it be true, then, that you told these poor people what was not the case, to keep them in the ignorance and darkness in which iniquity wished them to be . . . I must believe it, then ; it only remains for me to blush for it with you, and to hope that you will weep for it with me ! See, then, to what this solicitude (good God ! and but just now you adduced it as a justification ! ) this solicitude for your temporal life has led you ! It has led you . . . repel freely these words, if you think them unjust ; take them as a salutary humiliation, if they are not . . . it has led you to deceive the weak, to lie to your own children.”

—Just see now how things go !—thought Don Abbondio again to himself :—to that fiend,—meaning the Unnamed,—his arms round his neck ; and to me, for a half-lie, uttered for the sole purpose of saving my life, all this fuss and noise. But they are our superiors ; they’re always in the right. It’s my ill star that everybody sets upon me ; even saints.—And, speaking aloud, he said : “ I have done wrong ; I see that I’ve done wrong ; but what could I do in an extremity of that kind ? ”

“ Do you still ask this ? Have not I told you already ? Must I tell you again ? You should have loved, my son ; loved and prayed. Then you would have felt that iniquity may, indeed, have threats to employ, blows to bestow, but not commands to give ; you would have



united, according to the law of God, those whom man wished to put asunder; you would have extended towards these unhappy innocents the ministry they had a right to claim from you: God Himself would have been surety for the consequences, because you had followed His will: by following another's, *you* have come in as answerable: and for what consequences! But supposing all human resources failed you, supposing no way of escape was open, when you looked anxiously around you, thought about it, sought for it? Then you might have known, that when your poor children were married, they would themselves have provided for their escape, that they were ready to flee from the face of their powerful enemy, and had already designed a place of refuge. But even without this, did you not remember that you had a superior? How would he have this authority to rebuke you for having been wanting in the duties of your office, did he not feel himself bound to assist you in fulfilling them? Why did you not think of acquainting your bishop with the impediment that infamous violence had placed in the way of the exercise of your ministry?"

—The very advice of Perpetua!—thought Don Abondio, pettishly, who, in the midst of this conversation, had most vividly before his eyes the image of the bravoes, and the thought that Don Rodrigo was still alive and well, and that he would, some day or other, be returning in glory and triumph, and furious with revenge. And though the presence of so high a dignitary, together with his countenance and language, filled him with confusion, and inspired him with fear; yet it was not such fear as completely to subdue him, or expel the idea of resistance: because this idea was accompanied by the recollection, that, after all, the Cardinal employed neither musket, nor sword, nor bravoes.

"Why did you not remember," pursued the bishop,



“ that if there were no other retreat open to these betrayed innocents, I at least was ready to receive them, and put them in safety, had you directed them to me—the desolate to a bishop, as belonging to him, as a precious part, I don’t say, of his charge, but of his riches? And as to yourself, I should have become anxious for you; I should not have slept till I was sure that not a hair of your head would be injured. Do you think I had not the means of securing your life? Think you, that he who was so very bold, would have remitted nothing of his boldness, when he was aware that his plots and contrivances were known elsewhere, were known to me, that I was watching him, and was resolved to use all the means within my power in your defence? Didn’t you know that if men too often promise more than they can perform, so they not unfrequently threaten more than they would attempt to execute? Didn’t you know that iniquity depends not only on its own strength, but often also on the fears and credulity of others?”

—Just Perpetua’s arguments,—again thought Don Abbondio, never reflecting that this singular concurrence of his servant and Federigo Borromeo, in deciding on what he might and should have done, would tell very much against him.

“ But you,” pursued the Cardinal, in conclusion, “ saw nothing, and would see nothing but your own temporal danger; what wonder that it seemed to you sufficient to outweigh every other consideration?”

“ It was because I myself saw those terrible faces,” escaped from Don Abbondio in reply; “ I myself heard their words. Your illustrious Lordship can talk very well; but you ought to be in a poor priest’s shoes, and find yourself brought to the point.”

No sooner, however, had he uttered these words, than he bit his tongue with vexation; he saw that he had allowed himself to be too much carried away by petulance,



and said to himself,—Now comes the storm!—But raising his eyes doubtfully, he was utterly astonished to see the countenance of that man, whom he never could succeed in divining or comprehending, pass from the solemn air of authority and rebuke, to a sorrowful and pensive gravity.

“ ’Tis too true ! ” said Federigo ; “ such is our miserable and terrible condition. We must rigorously exact from others what God only knows whether *we* should be ready to yield : we must judge, correct, reprove ; and God knows what we ourselves should do in the same circumstances, what we actually have done in similar ones ! But woe unto me, had I to take my own weakness as the measure of other people’s duties, or the rule of my own teaching ! Yet I certainly ought to give a good example, as well as good instruction, to others, and not be like the Pharisees, who ‘ lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, while they themselves touch not the burden with one of their fingers.’ Well then, my son, my brother ; as the errors of those in authority are often better known to others than to themselves ; if you are aware of my having, from pusillanimity, or from any other motive, failed in any part of my duty, tell me of it candidly, and help me to amend ; so that where example has been wanting, confession at least may supply its place. Remonstrate freely with me on my weaknesses ; and then my words will acquire more value in my mouth, because you will feel more vividly that they are not mine, but are the words of Him who can give both to you and me the necessary strength to do what they prescribe.”

—Oh, what a holy man ! but what a tormentor !—thought Don Abbondio ;—he doesn’t even spare himself : that I should examine, interfere with, criticise, and accuse even himself !—He then said aloud : “ Oh, my lord, you are joking with me ! Who does not know the



fortitude of mind, the intrepid zeal of your illustrious Lordship?" And in his heart he added—Even too much so.—

"I did not ask you for praise, which makes me tremble," said Federigo; "for God knows my failings, and what I know of them myself is enough to confound me; but I wished that we should humble ourselves together before Him, that we might depend upon Him together. I would, for your own sake, that you should feel how your conduct has been, and your language still is, opposed to the law you nevertheless preach, and according to which you will be judged."

"All falls upon me," said Don Abbondio: "but these people, who have told you all this, didn't, probably, tell you, too, of their having introduced themselves treacherously into my house, to take me by surprise, and to contract a marriage contrary to the laws."

"They did tell me, my son: but it is this that grieves, that depresses me, to see you still anxious to excuse yourself; still thinking to excuse yourself by accusing others; still accusing others of what ought to make part of your own confession. Who placed them, I don't say under the necessity, but under the temptation, to do what they have done? Would they have sought this irregular method, had not the legitimate one been closed against them? Would they have thought of snaring their pastor, had they been received to his arms, assisted, advised by him? or of surprising him, had he not concealed himself? And do you lay the blame upon them? And are you indignant, because, after so many misfortunes,—what do I say? in the midst of misfortune,—they have said a word or two, to give vent to their sorrows, to their and your pastor? That the appeals of the oppressed, and the complaints of the afflicted, are odious to the world, is only too true; but we! . . . But what advantage would it have been to you, had they



remained silent? Would it turn to your profit that their cause should be left entirely to the judgment of God? Is it not a fresh reason why you should love these persons, (and you have many already,) that they have afforded you an opportunity of hearing the sincere voice of your pastor, that they have given you the means of knowing more clearly, and in part discharging, the great debt you owe them? Ah! if they have provoked, offended, annoyed you; I would say to you (and need I say it?) love them exactly for that reason. Love them, because they have suffered, because they still suffer, because they are yours, because they are weak, because you have need of pardon, to obtain which, think of what efficacy their prayer may be."

Don Abbondio was silent, but it was no longer an unconvinced and scornful silence: it was that of one who has more things to think about than to say. The words he had heard were unexpected consequences, novel applications, of a doctrine he had nevertheless long believed in his heart, without a thought of disputing it. The misfortunes of others, from the contemplation of which his fear of personal misfortune had hitherto diverted his mind, now made a new impression upon him. And if he did not feel all the contrition which the address was intended to produce (for this same fear was ever at hand to execute the office of defensive advocate), yet he felt it in some degree; he experienced dissatisfaction with himself, a kind of pity for others,—a mixture of compunction and shame. It was, if we may be allowed the comparison, like the crushed and humid wick of a candle, which, on being presented to the flame of a large torch, at first smokes, spirts, crackles, and will not ignite; but it lights at length, and, well or ill, burns. He would have accused himself bitterly, he would even have wept, had it not been for the thought of Don Rodrigo; and, as it was, betrayed sufficient emotion to convince the



Cardinal that his words had not been entirely without effect.

"Now," pursued he, "the one a fugitive from his home, the other on the point of abandoning it, both with too good reasons for absenting themselves, and without a probability of ever meeting again here, even if God purposes to re-unite them; now, alas! they have too little need of you; now you have no opportunity of doing them any service; nor can our limited foresight predict any for the future. But who knows whether a God of mercy may not be preparing some for you? Ah! suffer them not to escape! Seek them, be on the watch for them; beseech Him to create them for you."

"I will not fail, my Lord, I will not fail, I assure you," replied Don Abbondio, in a tone that showed it came from the heart.

"Ah yes, my son, yes!" exclaimed Federigo; and, with a dignity full of affection, he concluded, "Heaven knows how I should have wished to hold a different conversation with you. We have both lived long; Heaven knows if it has not been painful to me to be obliged thus to grieve your grey hairs with reprimands; how much more gladly I would have shared with you our common cares and sorrows, and conversed with you on the blessed hope to which we have so nearly approached. God grant that the language which I have been compelled to use, may be of use to us both. You would not wish that He should call me to account at the last day, for having countenanced you in a course of conduct in which you have so unhappily fallen short of your duty. Let us redeem the time; the hour of midnight is at hand; the Bridegroom cannot tarry; let us, therefore, keep our lamps burning. Let us offer our hearts, miserable and empty as they are, to God, that He may be pleased to fill them with that charity which amends the past, which is a pledge of the future, which



fears and trusts, weeps and rejoices, with true wisdom; which becomes, in every instance, the virtue of which we stand in need."

So saying, he left the room, followed by Don Abbondio.

Here our anonymous author informs us, that this was not the only interview between these two persons, nor Lucia the only subject of these interviews; but that he has confined himself to the mention of this one, that he might not digress too far from the principal object of his narrative. And, for the same reason, he does not make mention of other notable things, said and done by Federigo, throughout the whole course of his visitation; or of his liberality, or of the dissensions composed, and the ancient feuds between individuals, families, and entire towns, extinguished, or (which was, alas! far more frequent,) suppressed; or of sundry ruffians, and petty tyrants, tamed either for life, or for some time;—all of them things which occurred more or less in every part of the diocese where this excellent man made any stay.

He then goes on to say how, next morning, Donna Prassede came, according to agreement, to fetch Lucia, and to pay her respects to the Cardinal, who spoke in high terms of the young girl, and recommended her warmly to the Signora. Lucia parted from her mother, it may be imagined with what tears, left her cottage, and a second time said farewell to her native village, with that sense of doubly bitter sorrow, which is felt on leaving a spot which was once dearly loved, and can never be so again. But this parting from her mother was not the last; for Donna Prassede had announced that she should still reside some time at their country house, which was not very far off; and Agnese had promised her daughter to go thither, to give and receive a more mournful adieu.



The Cardinal was himself just starting for another parish, when the Curate of that in which the castle of the Unnamed was situated, arrived, and requested to speak to him. On being admitted, he presented a packet and a letter from that nobleman, wherein he besought Federigo to prevail upon Lucia's mother to accept a hundred *scudi* of gold, which were contained in the parcel, to serve either as a dowry for the young girl, or for any other use which the two women might deem more suitable; requesting him at the same time to tell them, that if ever, on any occasion, they thought he could render them any service, the poor girl knew too well where he lived; and that, for him, this would be one of the most desirable events that could happen. The Cardinal immediately sent for Agnese, who listened with equal pleasure and amazement to the courteous message, and suffered the packet to be put into her hand without much scrupulous ceremony. "May God reward this Signor for it," said she; "and will your illustrious Lordship thank him very kindly? And don't say a word about it to anybody, because this is a kind of country . . . Excuse me, Sir; I know very well that a gentleman like you won't chatter about these things; but . . . you understand me."

Home she went as quietly as possible; shut herself up in her room, unwrapped the parcel, and, however prepared by anticipation, beheld with astonishment so many of those coins altogether, and all her own, of which she had, perhaps, never seen more than one at once before, and that but seldom; she counted them over, and then had some trouble in putting them together again, and making the whole hundred stand up upon their edges; for every now and then, they would jut out, and slide from under her inexpert fingers; at length, however, she succeeded in rolling them up, after a fashion, put them in a handkerchief, so as to make quite



a large parcel, and wrapping a piece of cord several times round it, went and tucked it into a corner of her straw mattress. The rest of the day was spent in castle-building, devising plans for the future, and longing for the morrow. After going to bed, she lay for a long time awake, with the thought of the hundred *scudi* she had beneath her to keep her company; and when asleep, she saw them in her dreams. By break of day she arose, and set off in good time towards the villa, where her daughter was residing.

Though Lucia's extreme reluctance to speak of her vow was in no degree diminished, she had, on her part, resolved to force herself to open her mind to her mother in this interview, as it would be the last they should have for a long time.

Scarcely were they left alone, when Agnese, with a look full of animation, and, at the same time, in a suppressed tone of voice, as if there were some one present who she was afraid would hear, began; "I've a grand thing to tell you;" and proceeded to relate her unexpected good fortune.

"God bless this Signor," said Lucia: "now you have enough to be well off yourself, and you can also do good to others."

"Why!" replied Agnese, "don't you see how many things we may do with so much money? Listen; I have nobody but you—but you two, I may say; for, from the time that he began to address you, I've always considered Renzo as my son. The whole depends upon whether any misfortune has happened to him, seeing he gives no sign of being alive: but oh! surely all won't go ill with us? We'll hope not, we'll hope not. For me, I should have liked to lay my bones in my native country; but now that you can't be there, thanks to that villain! and when I remember that he is near, even my country has become hateful to me; and with you two



I can be happy anywhere. I was always inclined to go with you both to the very end of the world, and have ever been in readiness; but how could we do it without money? Do you understand, now? The little sum that the poor fellow had been scarcely able to lay by, with all his frugality, justice came, and cleared it away; but the Lord has sent us a fortune to make up for it. Well, when he has found a way of letting us know that he's alive, where he is, and what are his intentions, I'll come to Milan and fetch you; ay, I'll come myself. Once upon a time, I should have thought twice about such a thing, but misfortunes make one experienced and independent; I've gone as far as Monza, and know what it is to travel. I'll bring with me a proper companion,—a relation, as I may say,—Alessio, of Maggianico; for, to say the truth, a fit person isn't to be found in the country at all. I'll come with him; we will pay the expense, and . . . do you understand?"

But perceiving that, instead of cheering up, Lucia became more and more dejected, and only exhibited emotion, unmixed with pleasure, she stopped abruptly in the midst of her speech, and said, "But what's the matter with you? Don't you see it?"

"Poor mamma!" exclaimed Lucia, throwing her arm round her neck, and burying her weeping face in her bosom.

"What is the matter?" again asked her mother, anxiously.

"I ought to have told you at first," said Lucia, raising her head, and composing herself, "but I never had the heart to do it: pity me."

"But tell me then, now."

"I can no longer be that poor fellow's wife!"

"How? how?"

With head hung down, a beating heart, and tears rolling down her cheeks, like one who relates something



which, though a misfortune, is unalterable, Lucia disclosed her vow ; and, at the same time, clasping her hands, again besought her mother's forgiveness for having hitherto concealed it from her ; she implored her not to speak of such a thing to any living being, and to give her help, and facilitate the fulfilment of what she had promised.

Agnese remained stupified with consternation. She would have been angry with her for her silence to her mother, but the more serious thoughts the case itself aroused stifled this personal vexation ; she would have reproached her for the act, but it seemed to her that that would be a murmuring against Heaven ; the more so, as Lucia began to depict, more vividly than ever, the horrors of that night, the absolute desolation, and the un hoped-for deliverance, between which the promise had been so expressly, so solemnly made. And all the while, example after example rose to the recollection of the listener, which she had often heard repeated, and had repeated herself to her daughter, of strange and terrible punishments following upon the violation of a vow. After a few moments of astonishment, she said, " And what will you do now ? "

" Now," replied Lucia, " it is the Lord who must think for us ; the Lord, and the Madonna. I have placed myself in their hands ; they have not forsaken me hitherto ; they will not forsake me now, that . . . The mercy I ask for myself of the Lord, the only mercy, after the salvation of my soul, is, that He will let me rejoin you ; and He will grant it me—yes, I feel sure He will. That day . . . in that carriage . . . Ah, most holy Virgin ! . . . those men ! . . . who would have told me that they were bringing me to this, that they would bring me to join my mother the next day ? "

" But not to tell your mother of it at once ! " said Agnese, with a kind of anger, subdued by affection and pity.



"Oh, pity me! I had not the heart . . . and what use would it have been to grieve you so long ago?"

"And Renzo?" said Agnese, shaking her head.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lucia, with a sudden start, "I must think nothing more of that poor fellow. Long ago God had not destined . . . See how it appears that it was his will we should be kept asunder. And who knows? . . . but no, no: the Lord will have preserved him from danger, and will make him even happier without me."

"But now, you see," replied Agnese, "if it were not that you are bound for ever, for all the rest, if no misfortune has happened to Renzo, I might have found a remedy with so much money."

"But should we have got this money," replied Lucia, "if I had not passed through such a night? . . . It is the Lord who has ordered everything as it is; His will be done." And here her voice was choked with tears.

At this unexpected argument, Agnese remained silent and thoughtful. In a few moments, however, Lucia, suppressing her sobs, resumed: "Now that the deed is done, we must submit to it with cheerfulness; and you, my poor mother, you can help me, first, by praying to the Lord for your unhappy daughter, and then . . . that poor fellow must be told of it, you know. Will you see to this, and do me also this kindness; for you *can* think about it. When you can find out where he is, get some one to write to him; find a man . . . Oh, your cousin, Alessio, is just the man, a prudent and kind person, who has always wished us well, and won't gossip and tell tales; get him to write the thing just as it is, where I have been, how I have suffered, and that God has willed it should be thus; and that he must set his heart at rest, and that I can never, never be anybody's wife! And tell him of it in a kind and clever way; explain to him that I have promised, that I have



really made a vow . . . . When he knows that I have promised the Madonna . . . . he has always been good and religious . . . . And you, the moment you have any news of him, get somebody to write to me ; let me know that he is well, and then . . . . let me never hear anything more."

Agnese, with much feeling, assured her daughter that everything should be done as she desired.

"There's one thing more I have to say," resumed Lucia ; "this poor fellow . . . . if he hadn't had the misfortune to think of me, all that has happened to him never would have happened. He's a wanderer in the wide world ; they've ruined him on setting out in life ; they've carried away all he had, all those little savings he had made, poor fellow ; you know why . . . . And we have so much money ! Oh, mother ! as the Lord has sent us so much wealth, and you look upon this poor fellow, true enough, as belonging to you . . . . yes, as your son, oh ! divide it between you ; for, most assuredly, God won't let us want. Look out for the opportunity of a safe bearer, and send it him ; for Heaven knows how much he wants it !"

"Well, what do you think ?" replied Agnese : "I'll do it, indeed. Poor youth ! Why do you think I was so glad of this money ? But ! . . . . I certainly came here very glad, so I did. Well, I'll send it him ; poor youth ! But he, too . . . . I know what I would say ; certainly, money gives pleasure to those who want it ; but it isn't this that will make him rich."

Lucia thanked her mother for her ready and liberal assent, with such deep gratitude and affection, as would have convinced an observer that her heart still secretly clung to Renzo, more, perhaps, than she herself believed.

"And what shall I, a poor solitary woman, do without you ?" said Agnese, weeping in her turn.



“ And I without you, my poor mother ! and in a stranger’s house ! and down there in Milan ! . . . . But the Lord will be with us both, and afterwards will bring us together again. Between eight and nine months hence, we shall see each other once more here ; and by that time, or even before it, I hope, He will have disposed matters to our comfort. Leave it to Him. I will ever, ever beseech the Madonna for this mercy. If I had anything else to offer her, I would do it ; but she is so merciful, that she will obtain it for me as a gift.”

With these, and other similar and oft-repeated words of lamentation and comfort, of opposition and resignation, of interrogation and confident assurance, with many tears, and after long and renewed embraces, the women tore themselves apart, promising, by turns, to see each other the next autumn, at the latest ; as if the fulfilment of these promises depended upon themselves, and as people always do, nevertheless, in similar cases.

Meanwhile, a considerable time passed away, and Agnese could hear no tidings of Renzo. Neither letter nor message reached her from him ; and among all those whom she could ask from Bergamo, or the neighbourhood, no one knew anything at all about him.

Nor was she the only one who made inquiries in vain : Cardinal Federigo, who had not told the poor women merely out of compliment that he would seek for some information concerning the unfortunate man, had, in fact, immediately written to obtain it. Having returned to Milan after his visitation, he received a reply, in which he was informed, that the address of the person he had named could not be ascertained ; that he had certainly made some stay in such a place, where he had given no occasion for any talk about himself ; but that, one morning, he had suddenly disappeared ; that a relative of his, with whom he had lodged there, knew not what had become of him, and could only repeat certain



vague and contradictory rumours which were afloat, that the youth had enlisted for the Levant, had passed into Germany, or had perished in fording a river; but that the writer would not fail to be on the watch, and if any better authenticated tidings came to light, would immediately convey them to his most illustrious and very reverend Lordship.

These, and various other reports, at length spread throughout the territory of Lecco, and, consequently, reached the ears of Agnese. The poor woman did her utmost to discover which was the true account, and to arrive at the origin of this and that rumour; but she never succeeded in tracing it further than *they say*, which, even at the present day, suffices, by itself, to attest the truth of facts. Sometimes she had scarcely heard one tale, when some one would come and tell her not a word of it was true; only, however, to give her another in compensation, equally strange and disastrous. The truth is, all these rumours were alike unfounded.

The Governor of Milan, and Captain-General in Italy, Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, had complained bitterly to the Venetian minister, resident at Milan, because a rogue, and public robber, a promoter of plundering and massacre, the famous Lorenzo Tramaglino, who, while in the very hands of justice, had excited an insurrection to force his escape, had been received and harboured in the Bergamascan territory. The minister in residence replied, that he knew nothing about it; he would write to Venice, that he might be able to give his Excellency any explanation that could be procured on the subject.

It was a maxim of Venetian policy to second and cultivate the inclination of Milanese silk-weavers to emigrate into the Bergamascan territory, and, with this object, to provide many advantages for them, more especially that without which every other was worth-



less ; we mean, security. As, however, when two great diplomatists dispute, in however trifling a matter, third parties must always have a taste in the shape of consequences, Bortolo was warned, in confidence, it was not known by whom, that Renzo was not safe in that neighbourhood, and that he would do wisely to place him in some other manufacture for a while, even under a false name. Bortolo understood the hint, raised no objections, explained the matter to his cousin, took him with him in a carriage, conveyed him to another new silk-mill, about fifteen miles off, and presented him, under the name of Antonio Rivolta, to the owner, who was a native of the Milanese, and an old acquaintance. This person, though the times were so bad, needed little entreaty to receive a workman who was recommended to him as honest and skilful by an intelligent man like Bortolo. On trial of him afterwards, he found he had only reason to congratulate himself on the acquisition ; excepting that, at first, he thought the youth must be naturally rather stupid, because, when any one called *Antonio*, he generally did not answer.

Soon after, an order came from Venice, in peaceable form, to the sheriff of Bergamo, requiring him to obtain and forward information, whether, in his jurisdiction, and more expressly in such a village, such an individual was to be found. The sheriff, having made the necessary researches in the manner he saw was desired, transmitted a reply in the negative, which was transmitted to the minister at Milan, who transmitted it to Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova.

There were not wanting inquisitive people who tried to learn from Bortolo why this youth was no longer with him, and where he had gone. To the first inquiry he replied, "Nay, he has disappeared !" but afterwards, to get rid of the most pertinacious without giving them a suspicion of what was really the case, he contrived to



entertain them, some with one, some with another, of the stories we have before mentioned: always, however, as uncertain reports, which he also had heard related, without having any positive accounts.

But when inquiries came to be made of him by commission from the Cardinal, without mentioning his name, and with a certain show of importance and mystery, merely giving him to understand that it was in the name of a great personage, Bortolo became the more guarded, and deemed it the more necessary to adhere to his general method of reply; nay, as a great personage was concerned, he gave out by wholesale all the stories which he had published, one by one, of his various disasters.

Let it not be imagined that such a person as Don Gonzalo bore any personal enmity to the poor mountain silk-weaver; that informed, perhaps, of his irreverence and ill-language towards his Moorish king, chained by the throat, he would have wreaked his vengeance upon him; or that he thought him so dangerous a subject as to be worth pursuing even in flight, and not suffered to live even at a distance, like the Roman senate with Hannibal. Don Gonzalo had too many and too important affairs in his head to trouble himself about Renzo's doings; and if it seems that he did trouble himself about them, it arose from a singular combination of circumstances, by which the poor unfortunate fellow, without desiring it, and without being aware of it, either then, or ever afterwards, found himself linked, as by a very subtle and invisible chain, to these same too many and too important affairs.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

**I**T has already occurred to us more than once to make mention of the war which was at this time raging, for the succession to the states of the Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, the second of that name; but it has always occurred in a moment of great haste, so that we have never been able to give more than a cursory hint of it. Now, however, for the due understanding of our narrative, a more particular notice of it is required. They are matters which any one who knows anything of history must be acquainted with; but as, from a just estimate of ourselves, we must suppose that this work can be read by none but the ignorant, it will not be amiss that we should here relate as much as will suffice to give some idea of them to those who need it.

We have said that on the death of this duke, the first in the line of succession, Carlo Gonzaga, head of a younger branch now established in France, where he



possessed the duchies of Nevers and Rhetel, had entered upon the possession of Mantua, and we may now add, of Monferrat: for our haste made us leave this name on the point of the pen. The Spanish minister, who was resolved at any compromise (we have said this too) to exclude the new prince from these two fiefs, and who, to exclude him, wanted some pretext (because wars made without any pretext would be unjust), had declared himself upholder of the claims which another Gonzaga Ferrante, prince of Guastalla, pretended to have upon Mantua; and Carlo Emanuele I., duke of Savoy, and Margherita Gonzaga, duchess dowager of Lorraine, upon Monferrat. Don Gonzalo, who was of the family of the great commander, and bore his name, who had already made war in Flanders, and was extremely anxious to bring one into Italy, was perhaps the person who made most stir that this might be undertaken: and in the meanwhile, interpreting the intentions, and anticipating the orders, of the above-named minister, he concluded a treaty with the Duke of Savoy for the invasion and partition of Monferrat; and afterwards readily obtained a ratification of it from the Count Duke, by persuading him that the acquisition of Casale would be very easy, which was the most strongly defended point of the portion assigned to the King of Spain. He protested, however, in the king's name, against any intention of occupying the country further than under the name of a deposit, until the sentence of the Emperor should be declared; who, partly from the influence of others, partly from private motives of his own, had, in the meanwhile, denied the investiture to the new duke, and intimated to him that he should give up to him in sequestration the controverted states: afterwards, having heard the different sides, he would restore them to him who had the best claim. To these conditions the Duke of Nevers would not consent.



He had, however, friends of some eminence in the Cardinal de Richelieu, the Venetian noblemen, and the Pope. But the first of these, at that time engaged in the siege of La Rochelle, and in a war with England, and thwarted by the party of the queen-mother, Maria de' Medici, who, for certain reasons of her own, was opposed to the house of Nevers, could give nothing but hopes. The Venetians would not stir, nor even declare themselves in his favour, unless a French army were first brought into Italy; and while secretly aiding the duke as they best could, they contented themselves with putting off the Court of Madrid and the Governor of Milan with protests, propositions, and peaceable or threatening admonitions, according to circumstances. Urban VIII. recommended Nevers to his friends, interceded in his favour with his enemies, and designed projects of accommodation; but would not hear a word of sending men into the field.

By this means the two confederates for offensive measures were enabled the more securely to begin their concerted operations. Carlo Emanuele invaded Monferrat from his side; Don Gonzalo willingly laid siege to Casale, but did not find in the undertaking all the satisfaction he had promised himself: for it must not be imagined that war is a rose without a thorn. The Court did not provide him with nearly all the means he demanded; his ally, on the contrary, assisted him too much: that is to say, after having taken his own portion, he went on to take that which was assigned to the King of Spain. Don Gonzalo was enraged beyond expression; but fearing that, if he made any noise about it, this duke, as active in intrigues and fickle in treaty, as bold and valiant in arms, would revolt to the French, he was obliged to shut his eyes to it, gnaw the bit, and put on a satisfied air. The siege, besides, went on badly, being protracted to a great length, and some-



times thrown back, owing to the steady, cautious, and resolute behaviour of the besieged, the lack of sufficient numbers on the part of the besiegers, and, according to the report of some historian, the many false steps taken by Don Gonzalo; on which point we leave truth to choose her own side, being inclined even, were it really so, to consider it a very happy circumstance, if it were the cause that in this enterprise there were some fewer than usual slain, beheaded, or wounded; and, *cæteris paribus*, rather fewer tiles injured in Casale. In the midst of these perplexities, the news of the sedition at Milan arrived, to the scene of which he repaired in person.

Here, in the report which was given him, mention was also made of the rebellious and clamorous flight of Renzo, and of the real or supposed doings which had been the occasion of his arrest; and they could also inform him that this person had taken refuge in the territory of Bergamo. This circumstance arrested Don Gonzalo's attention. He had been informed from another quarter, that great interest had been felt at Venice in the insurrection at Milan; that they had supposed he would be obliged on this account to abandon the siege of Casale; and that they imagined he was reduced to great despondency and perplexity about it: the more so, as shortly after this event, the tidings had arrived, so much desired by these noblemen, and dreaded by himself, of the surrender of La Rochelle. Feeling considerably annoyed, both as a man and a politician, that they should entertain such an opinion of his proceedings, he sought every opportunity of undeceiving them, and persuading them, by induction, that he had lost none of his former boldness; for to say, explicitly, I have no fear, is just to say nothing. One good plan is to show displeasure, to complain, and to expostulate: accordingly, the Venetian ambassador having waited upon him to pay his respects, and at the same time to



read in his countenance and behaviour how he felt within, Don Gonzalo, after having spoken lightly of the tumult, like a man who had already provided a remedy for everything, made those complaints about Renzo which the reader already knows ; as he is also acquainted with what resulted from them in consequence. From that time, he took no further interest in an affair of so little importance, which, as far as he was concerned, was terminated ; and when, a long time afterwards, the reply came to him at the camp at Casale, whither he had returned, and where he had very different things to occupy his mind, he raised and threw back his head, like a silkworm searching for a leaf ; reflected for a moment, to recall more clearly to his memory a fact of which he only retained a shadowy idea ; remembered the circumstance, had a vague and momentary recollection of the person ; passed on to something else, and thought no more about it.

But Renzo, who, from the little which he had darkly comprehended, was far from supposing so benevolent an indifference, had, for a time, no other thought, or rather, to speak more correctly, no other care, than to keep himself concealed. It may be imagined whether he did not ardently long to send news of himself to the women, and receive some from them in exchange ; but there were two great difficulties in the way. One was, that he also would have been forced to trust to an amanuensis, for the poor fellow knew not how to write, nor even read, in the broad sense of the word ; and if, when asked the question, as the reader may perhaps remember, by the Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli, he replied in the affirmative, it was not, certainly, a boast, a mere bravado, as they say ; it was the truth, that he could manage to read print, when he could take his time over it : writing, however, was a different thing. He would be obliged, then, to make a third party the depository.



of his affairs, and of a secret so jealously guarded : and it was not so easy in those times to find a man who could use his pen, and in whom confidence could be placed, particularly in a country where he had no old acquaintances. The other difficulty was to find a bearer ; a man who was going just to the place he wanted, who would take charge of the letter, and really recollect to deliver it ; all these, too, qualifications rather difficult to be met with in one individual.

At length, by dint of searching and sounding, he found somebody to write for him ; but ignorant where the women were, or whether they were still at Monza, he judged it better to enclose the letter directed to Agnese under cover to Father Cristoforo, with a line or two also for him. The writer undertook the charge, moreover, of forwarding the packet, and delivered it to one who would pass not far from Pescarenico ; this person left it, with many strict charges, at an inn on the road, at the nearest point to the monastery ; and, as it was directed to a convent, it reached this destination ; but what became of it afterwards was never known. Renzo, receiving no reply, sent off a second letter, nearly like the first, which he enclosed in another to an acquaintance, or distant relation of his at Lecco. He sought for another bearer, and found one ; and this time the letter reached the person to whom it was addressed. Agnese posted off to Maggianico, had it read and interpreted to her by her cousin Alessio ; concerted with him a reply, which he put down in writing for her, and found means of sending it to Antonio Rivolta in his present place of abode : all this, however, not quite so expeditiously as we have recounted it. Renzo received the reply, and in time sent an answer to it. In short, a correspondence was set on foot between the two parties, neither frequent nor regular, but still kept up by starts, and at intervals.



To form some idea, however, of this correspondence, it is necessary to know a little how such things went on in those days—indeed, how they go on now ; for in this particular, I believe, there is little or no variation.

The peasant who knows not how to write, and finds himself reduced to the necessity of communicating his ideas to the absent, has recourse to one who understands the art, taking him, as far as he can, from among those of his own rank,—for, with others, he is either shame-faced, or afraid to trust them ; he informs him, with more or less order and perspicuity, of past events ; and, in the same manner, describes to him the thoughts he is to express. The man of letters understands part, misunderstands part, gives a little advice, proposes some variation, says : “ Leave it to me ; ” then he takes the pen, transfers the idea he has received, as he best can, from speaking to writing, corrects it his own way, improves it, puts in flourishes, abbreviates, or even omits, according as he deems most suitable for his subject ; for so it is, and there is no help for it, he who knows more than his neighbours will not be a passive instrument in their hands ; and when he interferes in other people’s affairs, he will force them to do things his own way. In addition to all this, it is not always quite a matter of course that the above-named literate himself expresses all that he intended ; nay, sometimes it happens just the reverse, as, indeed, it does even to us who write for the press. When the letter thus completed reaches the hands of the correspondent, who is equally unpractised in his a, b, c, he takes it to another learned genius of that tribe, who reads and expounds it to him. Questions arise on the manner of understanding it, because the person interested, presuming upon his acquaintance with the antecedent circumstances, asserts that certain words mean such and such a thing ; the reader, resting upon his greater experience in the art of composition, affirms that



they mean another. At last, the one who does not know, is obliged to put himself into the hands of the one who does, and trusts to him the task of writing a reply; which, executed like the former example, is liable to a similar style of interpretation. If, in addition, the subject of the correspondence be a rather delicate topic, if secret matters be treated of in it, which it is desirable should not be understood by a third party, in case the letter should go astray; if with this view there be a positive intention of not expressing things quite clearly, then, however short a time the correspondence is kept up, the parties invariably finish by understanding each other as well as the two schoolmen who had disputed for four hours upon abstract mutations; not to take our simile from living beings, lest we expose ourselves to have our ears boxed.

Now, the case of our two correspondents was exactly what we have described. The first letter written in Renzo's name, contained many subjects. Primarily, besides an account of the flight, by far more concise, but, at the same time, more confused, than that which we have given, was a relation of his actual circumstances, from which both Agnese and her interpreter were very far from deriving any lucid or tolerably correct idea. Then he spoke of secret intelligence, change of name, his being in safety, but still requiring concealment; things in themselves not very familiar to their understandings, and related in the letter rather enigmatically. Then followed warm and impassioned inquiries about Lucia's situation, with dark and mournful hints of the rumours which had reached even his ears. There were, finally, uncertain and distant hopes and plans in reference to the future; and for the present, promises and entreaties to keep their plighted faith, not to lose patience or courage, and to wait for better days.

Some time passed away, and Agnese found a trusty



messenger to convey an answer to Renzo, with the fifty *scudi* assigned to him by Lucia. At the sight of so much gold, he knew not what to think; and, with a mind agitated by wonder and suspense, which left no room for gratification, he set off in search of his amanuensis, to make him interpret the letter, and find the key to so strange a mystery.

Agnese's scribe, after lamenting, in the letter, the want of perspicuity in Renzo's epistle, went on to describe, in a way at least quite as much to be lamented, the tremendous history of that person, (so he expressed himself;) and here he accounted for the fifty *scudi*; then he went on to speak of the vow, employing much circumlocution in the expression of it, but adding, in more direct and explicit terms, the advice to set his heart at rest, and think no more about it.

Renzo very nearly quarrelled with the reader; he trembled, shuddered, became enraged with what he had understood, and with what he could not understand. Three or four times did he make him read over the melancholy writing, now comprehending better, now finding what had at first appeared clear, more and more incomprehensible. And, in this fervour of passion, he insisted upon his amanuensis immediately taking pen in hand, and writing a reply. After the strongest expressions imaginable of pity and horror at Lucia's circumstances—"Write," pursued he, as he dictated to his secretary, "that I won't set my heart at rest, and that I never will; and that this is not advice to be giving to a lad like me; and that I won't touch the money; that I'll put it by, and keep it for the young girl's dowry; that she already belongs to me; and that I know nothing about a vow; and that I have often heard say that the Madonna interests herself to help the afflicted, and obtain favours for them; but that she encourages them to despise and break their word, I never heard; and that



this vow can't hold good; and that with this money we have enough to keep house here; and that if I am somewhat in difficulties now, it's only a storm, which will quickly pass over;" and other similar things. Agnese received this letter also, and replied to it; and the correspondence continued in the manner we have described.

Lucia felt greatly relieved when her mother had contrived, by some means or other, to let her know that Renzo was alive, safe, and acquainted with her vow, and desired nothing more than that he should forget her; or, to express it more exactly, that he should try to forget her. She, on her part, made a similar resolution a hundred times a day with respect to him; and employed, too, every means she could think of to put it into effect. She continued to work indefatigably with her needle, trying to apply her whole mind to it; and when Renzo's image presented itself to her view, would begin to repeat or chant some prayers to herself. But that image, just as if it were actuated by pure malice, did not generally come so openly; it introduced itself stealthily behind others, so that the mind might not be aware of having harboured it, till after it had been there for some time. Lucia's thoughts were often with her mother; how should it have been otherwise? and the ideal Renzo would gently creep in as a third party, as the real person had so often done. So, with everybody, in every place, in every remembrance of the past, he never failed to introduce himself. And if the poor girl allowed herself sometimes to penetrate in fancy into the obscurity of the future, there, too, he would appear, if it were only to say: I, ten to one, shall not be there. However, if not to think of him at all were a hopeless undertaking, yet Lucia succeeded, up to a certain point, in thinking less about him, and less intensely than her heart would have wished. She would even have



succeeded better, had she been alone in desiring to do so. But there was Donna Prassede, who, bent, on her part, upon banishing the youth from her thoughts, had found no better expedient than constantly talking about him. "Well," she would say, "have you given up thinking of him?"

"I am thinking of nobody," replied Lucia.

Donna Prassede, however, not to be appeased by so evasive an answer, replied that there must be deeds, not words; and enlarged upon the usual practices of young girls, "who," said she, "when they have set their hearts upon a dissolute fellow, (and it is just to such they have a leaning,) won't consent to be separated from them. An honest and rational contract to a worthy man, a well-trying character, which, by some accident, happens to be frustrated,—they are quickly resigned; but let it be a villain, and it is an incurable wound." And then she commenced a panegyric upon the poor absentee, the rascal who had come to Milan to plunder the town, and massacre the inhabitants; and tried to make Lucia confess all the knavish tricks he had played in his own country.

Lucia, with a voice tremulous with shame, sorrow, and such indignation as could find place in her gentle breast and humble condition, affirmed and testified that the poor fellow had done nothing in his country to give occasion for anything but good to be said of him; "she wished," she said, "that some one were present from his neighbourhood, that the lady might hear his testimony." Even on his adventures at Milan, the particulars of which she could not learn, she defended him merely from the knowledge she had had of him and his behaviour, from his very childhood. She defended him, or intended to defend him, from the simple duty of charity, from her love of truth, and, to use just the expression by which she described her feelings to her-



self, as her neighbour. But Donna Prassede drew fresh arguments from these apologies, to convince Lucia that she had quite lost her heart after that man. And, to say truth, in those moments it is difficult to say how the matter stood. The disgraceful picture the old lady drew of the poor youth, revived, from opposition, more vividly and distinctly than ever in the mind of the young girl, the idea which long habit had established there; the recollections she had stifled by force, returned in crowds upon her; aversion and contempt recalled all her old motives of esteem and sympathy, and blind and violent hatred only excited stronger feelings of pity. With these feelings, who can say how much there might or might not be of another affection which follows upon them, and introduces itself so easily into the mind; let it be imagined what it would do in one whence it was attempted to eject it by force. However it may be, the conversation, on Lucia's side, was never carried to any great length, for words were very soon resolved into tears.

Had Donna Prassede been induced to treat her in this way from some inveterate hatred towards her, these tears might, perhaps, have vanquished and silenced her; but as she spoke with the intention of doing good, she went on without allowing herself to be moved by them, as groans and imploring cries may arrest the weapons of an enemy, but not the instrument of the surgeon. Having, however, discharged her duty for that time, she would turn from reproaches and denunciations to exhortation and advice, sweetened also by a little praise; thus designing to temper the bitter with the sweet, the better to obtain her purpose, by working upon the heart under every state of feeling. These quarrels, however, (which had always nearly the same beginning, middle, and end,) left no resentment, properly speaking, in the good Lucia's heart against the harsh sermonizer, who, after



all, treated her, in general, very kindly ; and even in this instance, evinced a good intention. Yet they left her in such agitation, with such a tumult of thoughts and affections, that it required no little time, and much effort, to regain her former degree of calmness.

It was well for her that she was not the only one to whom Donna Prassede had to do good ; for, by this means, these disputes could not occur so frequently. Besides the rest of the family, all of whom were persons more or less needing amendment and guidance—besides all the other occasions which offered themselves to her, or she contrived to find, of extending the same kind office, of her own free will, to many to whom she was under no obligations ; she had also five daughters, none of whom were at home, but who gave her much more to think about than if they had been. Three of these were nuns, two were married : hence Donna Prassede naturally found herself with three monasteries, and two houses to superintend ; a vast and complicated undertaking, and the more arduous, because two husbands, backed by fathers, mothers, and brothers ; three abbesses, supported by other dignitaries, and by many nuns, would not accept her superintendence. It was a complete warfare, *alias* five warfares, concealed, and even courteous, up to a certain point, but ever active, ever vigilant. There was in every one of these places a continued watchfulness to avoid her solicitude, to close the door against her counsels, to elude her inquiries, and to keep her in the dark, as far as possible, on every undertaking. We do not mention the resistance, the difficulties she encountered in the management of other still more extraneous affairs : it is well known that one must generally do good to men by force. The place where her zeal could best exercise itself, and have full play, was in her own house : here everybody was subject in everything, and for everything, to her authority, saving Don



Ferrante, with whom things went on in a manner entirely peculiar.

A man of a studious turn, he neither loved to command nor obey. In all household matters, his wife was the mistress, with his free consent; but he would not submit to be her slave. And if, when requested, he occasionally lent her the assistance of his pen, it was because it suited his taste; and after all, he knew how to say no, when he was not convinced of what she wished him to write. "Use your own sense," he would say, in such cases; "do it yourself, since it seems so clear to you." Donna Prassede, after vainly endeavouring for some time to induce him to recant, and do what she wanted, would be obliged to content herself with murmuring frequently against him, with calling him one who hated trouble, a man who would have his own way, and a scholar; a title which, though pronounced with contempt, was generally mixed with a little complacency.

Don Ferrante passed many hours in his study, where he had a considerable collection of books, scarcely less than three hundred volumes: all of them choice works, and the most highly esteemed on their numerous several subjects, in each of which he was more or less versed. In astrology, he was deservedly considered as more than a *dilettante*; for he not only possessed the generical notions and common vocabulary of influences, aspects, and conjunctions; but he knew how to talk very aptly, and as it were *ex cathedra*, of the twelve houses of the heavens, of the great circles, of lucid and obscure degrees, of exaltation and dejection, of transitions and revolutions—in short, of the most assured and most recondite principles of the science. And it was for perhaps twenty years that he maintained, in long and frequent disputes, the system of Cardano against another learned man who was staunchly attached to that of Alcabizio,



from mere obstinacy, as Don Ferrante said; who, readily acknowledging the superiority of the ancients, could not, however, endure that unwillingness to yield to the moderns, even when they evidently have reason on their side. He was also more than indifferently acquainted with the history of the science; he could, on an occasion, quote the most celebrated predictions which had been verified, and reason clearly and learnedly on other celebrated predictions which had failed, showing that the fault was not in the science, but in those who knew not how to apply it.

He had learnt as much of ancient philosophy as might have sufficed him, but still went on acquiring more from the study of Diogenes Laertius. As, however, these systems, how beautiful soever they may be, cannot all be held at once; and as, to be a philosopher, it is necessary to choose an author, so Don Ferrante had chosen Aristotle, who, he used to say, was neither ancient nor modern; he was the philosopher, and nothing more. He possessed also various works of the wisest and most ingenious disciples of that school among the moderns: those of its impugnors he would never read, not to throw away time, as he said; nor buy, not to throw away money. Solely, by way of exception, did he find room in his library for those celebrated two-and-twenty volumes *De Subtilitate*, and for some other anti-peripatetic work of Cardano's, in consideration of his value in astrology. He said, that he who could write the treatise *De Restitutione temporum et motuum cælestium*, and the book *Duodecim geniturarum*, deserved to be listened to even when he erred; that the great defect of this man was, that he had too much talent; and that no one could conceive what he might have arrived at, even in philosophy, had he kept himself in the right way. In short, although, in the judgment of the learned, Don Ferrante passed for a consummate peripatetic, yet he did not



deem that he knew enough about it himself; and more than once he was obliged to confess, with great modesty, that essence, universals, the soul of the world, and the nature of things, were not so very clear as might be imagined.

He had made a recreation rather than a study of natural philosophy; the very works of Aristotle on this subject he had rather read than studied: yet, with this slight perusal, with the notices incidentally gathered from treatises on general philosophy, with a few cursory glances at the *Magia naturale* of Porta, at the three histories, *lapidum*, *animalium*, *plantarum*, of Cardano, at the treatise on herbs, plants, and animals, by Albert Magnus, and at a few other works of less note, he could entertain a party of learned men, for a while, with dissertations on the most wonderful virtues and most remarkable curiosities of many medicinal herbs; he could minutely describe the forms and habits of sirens and the solitary phoenix; and explain how the salamander exists in the fire without burning; how the remora, that diminutive fish, has strength and ability completely to arrest a ship of any size in the high seas; how drops of dew become pearls in the shell; how the chameleon feeds on air; how ice, by being gradually hardened, is formed into crystal, in the course of time; with many other of the most wonderful secrets of nature.

Into those of magic and witchcraft he had penetrated still more deeply, as it was a science, says our anonymous author, much more necessary, and more in vogue in those days, in which the facts were of far higher importance, and it was more within reach to verify them. It is unnecessary to say that he had no other object in view in such a study, than to inform himself, and to become acquainted with the very worst arts of the sorcerers, in order that he might guard against them and



defend himself. And, by the guidance principally of the great Martino Delrio (a leader of the science), he was capable of discoursing *ex professo* upon the fascination of love, the fascination of sleep, the fascination of hatred, and the infinite varieties of these three principal genres of enchantment, which are only too often, again says our anonymous author, beheld in practice at the present day, attended by such lamentable effects.

Not less vast and profound was his knowledge of history, particularly universal history, in which his authors were Tarcagnola, Dolce, Bugatti, Campana, and Guazzo ; in short, all the most highly esteemed.

"But what is history," said Don Ferrante, frequently, "without politics?—A guide who walks on and on, with no one following to learn the road, and who consequently throws away his steps ; as politics without history is one who walks without a guide." There was therefore a place assigned to statistics on his shelves ; where, among many of humbler rank and less renown, appeared, in all their glory, Bodino, Cavalcanti, Sansovino, Paruta, and Boccalini. There were two books, however, which Don Ferrante infinitely preferred above all others on this subject ; two which, up to a certain time, he used to call the first, without ever being able to decide to which of the two this rank should exclusively belong : one was the *Principe* and *Discorsi* of the celebrated Florentine secretary ; "a great rascal, certainly," said Don Ferrante, "but profound : " the other, the *Ragion di Stato* of the no less celebrated Giovanni Botero ; "an honest man, certainly," said he again, "but shrewd." Shortly after, however, just at the period which our story embraces, a work came to light which terminated the question of pre-eminence, by surpassing the works of even these two *Matadores*, said Don Ferrante ; a book in which was enclosed and condensed every trick of the system, that it might be known,



and every virtue, that it might be practised; a book of small dimensions, but all of gold; in one word, the *Stattista Regnante* of Don Valeriano Castiglione, that most celebrated man, of whom it might be said that the greatest scholars rivalled each other in sounding his praises, and the greatest personages in trying to rob him of them; that man, whom Pope Urban VIII. honoured, as is well known, with magnificent encomiums; whom the Cardinal Borghese and the Viceroy of Naples, Don Pietro di Toledo, entreated to relate,—one, the doings of Pope Paul V., the other, the wars of his Catholic Majesty in Italy, and both in vain; that man, whom Louis XIII., King of France, at the suggestion of Cardinal de Richelieu, nominated his historiographer; on whom Duke Carlo Emanuele, of Savoy, conferred the same office; in praise of whom, not to mention other lofty testimonials, the Duchess Cristina, daughter of the most Christian King Henry IV., could, in a diploma, among many other titles, enumerate “the certainty of the reputation he is obtaining in Italy of being the first writer of our times.”

But if, in all the above-mentioned sciences, Don Ferrante might be considered a learned man, one there was in which he merited and enjoyed the title of Professor—the science of chivalry. Not only did he argue on it in a really masterly manner, but, frequently requested to interfere in affairs of honour, always gave some decision. He had in his library, and one may say, indeed, in his head, the works of the most renowned writers on this subject: Paris del Pozzo, Fausto da Longiano, Urrea, Muzio, Romei, Albergato, the first and second *Forno* of Torquato Tasso, of whose other works, “Jerusalem Delivered,” as well as “Jerusalem Taken,” he had ever in readiness, and could quote from memory, on occasion, all the passages which might serve as a text on the subject of chivalry. The author, however, of all authors,



in his estimation, was our celebrated Francesco Birago, with whom he was more than once associated in giving judgment on cases of honour; and who, on his side, spoke of Don Ferrante in terms of particular esteem. And from the time that the *Discorsi Cavallereschi* of this renowned writer made their appearance, he predicted, without hesitation, that this work would destroy the authority of Olevano, and would remain, together with its other noble sisters, as a code of primary authority among posterity: and every one may see, says our anonymous author, how this prediction has been verified.

From this he passes on to the study of belles lettres; but we begin to doubt whether the reader has really any great wish to go forward with us in this review, and even to fear that we may already have won the title of servile copyist for ourselves, and that of a *bore*, to be shared with the anonymous author, for having followed him out so simply, even thus far, into a subject foreign to the principal narrative, and in which, probably, he was only so diffuse, for the purpose of parading erudition, and showing that he was not behind his age. However, leaving written what is written, that we may not lose our labour, we will omit the rest to resume the thread of our story: the more willingly, as we have a long period to traverse without meeting with any of our characters, and a longer still, before finding those in whose success the reader will be most interested, if anything in the whole story has interested him at all.

Until the autumn of the following year, 1629, they all remained, some willingly, some by force, almost in the state in which we left them, nothing happening to any one, and no one doing anything worthy of being recorded. The autumn at length approached, in which Agnese and Lucia had counted upon meeting again; but a great public event frustrated that expectation:



and this certainly was one of its most trifling effects. Other great events followed, which, however, made no material change in the destinies of our characters. At length, new circumstances, more general, more influential, and more extensive, reached even to them,—even to the lowest of them, according to the world's scale. It was like a vast, sweeping, and irresistible hurricane, which, uprooting trees, tearing off roofs, levelling battlements, and scattering their fragments in every direction, stirs up the straws hidden in the grass, pries into every corner for the light and withered leaves, which a gentler breeze would only have lodged there more securely, and bears them off in its headlong course of fury.

Now, that the private events which yet remain for us to relate may be rendered intelligible, it will be absolutely necessary for us, even here, to premise some kind of account of these public ones, and thus make a still further digression.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**A**FTER the sedition of St. Martin's and the following day, it seemed that abundance had returned to Milan, as by enchantment. The bread shops were plentifully supplied; the price as low as in the most prolific years, and flour in proportion. They who during those two days had employed themselves in shouting, or doing something worse, had now (excepting a few who had been seized,) reason to congratulate themselves: and let it not be imagined that they spared these congratulations, after the first fear of being captured had subsided. In the squares, at the corners of the streets, and in the taverns, there was undisguised rejoicing, a general murmur of applauses, and half-uttered boasts of having found a way to reduce bread to a moderate price. In the midst, however, of this vaunting and festivity, there was (and how could it be otherwise?) a secret feeling of disquietude, and presentiment



that the thing could not last long. They besieged the bakers and meal-sellers, as they had before done in the former artificial and transient abundance, procured by the first tariff of Antonio Ferrer; he who had a little money in advance, invested it in bread and flour, which were stored up in chests, small barrels, and iron vessels. By thus emulating each other in enjoying present advantage, they rendered (I do not say, its long duration impossible, for such it was of itself already, but even) its continuance from moment to moment ever more difficult. And lo! on the 15th November, Antonio Ferrer, *De orden de su Excelencia*, issued a proclamation, in which all who had any corn or flour in their houses were forbidden to buy either one or the other, and every one else to purchase more than would be required for two days, *under pain of pecuniary and corporal punishments, at the will of his Excellency*. It contained, also, intimations to the elders, (a kind of public officer,) and insinuations to all other persons, to inform against offenders; orders to magistrates to make strict search in any houses which might be reported to them; together with fresh commands to the bakers to keep their shops well furnished with bread, *under pain, in case of failure, of five years in the galleys, or even greater penalties, at the will of his Excellency*. He who can imagine such a proclamation executed, must have a very clever imagination; and, certainly, had all those issued at that time taken effect, the duchy of Milan would have had at least as many people on the seas as Great Britain itself may have at present.

At any rate, as they ordered the bakers to make so much bread, it was also necessary to give some orders that the materials for making it should not fail. They had contrived, (as, in times of scarcity, the endeavour is always renewed to reduce into bread different alimentary materials, usually consumed under another form,)



they had contrived, I say, to introduce rice into a composition, called mixed bread. On the 23d November, an edict was published, to limit to the disposal of the superintendent, and the twelve members who constituted the board of provision, one half of the dressed rice (*risone* it was then, and is still called there,) which every one possessed; with the threat, to any one who should dispose of it without the permission of these noblemen, of the loss of the article, and a fine of three crowns a bushel. The honesty of this proceeding every one can appreciate.

But it was necessary to pay for this rice, and at a price very disproportioned to that of bread. The burden of supplying the enormous inequality had been imposed upon the city; but the Council of the *Decurioni*, who had undertaken to discharge the debt in behalf of the city, deliberated the same day, 23d of November, about remonstrating with the governor on the impossibility of any longer maintaining such an engagement; and the governor, in a decree of the 7th December, fixed the price of the above-named rice at twelve livres per bushel. To those who should demand a higher price, as well as to those who should refuse to sell, he threatened the loss of the article, and a fine of equal value, *and greater pecuniary, and even corporal punishment, including the galleys, at the will of his Excellency, according to the nature of the case, and the rank of the offender.*

The price of undressed rice had been already limited before the insurrection; as the tariff, or, to use that most famous term of modern annals, the *maximum* of wheat, and other of the commonest grains, had probably been established in different decrees, which we have not happened to meet with.

Bread and flour being thus reduced to a moderate price at Milan, it followed of consequence that people



flocked thither in crowds to obtain a supply. To obviate this inconvenience, as he said, Don Gonzalo, in another edict of the 15th December, prohibited carrying bread out of the city, beyond the value of twenty pence, under penalty of the loss of the bread itself, and twenty-five crowns; *or, in case of inability, of two stripes in public, and greater punishment still, as usual, at the will of his Excellency.* On the 22d of the same month, (and why so late, it is difficult to say,) a similar order was issued with regard to flour and grain.

The multitude had tried to procure abundance by pillage and incendiarism; the legal arm would have maintained it with the galleys and the scourge. The means were convenient enough in themselves, but what they had to do with the end, the reader knows; how they actually answered their purpose, he will see directly. It is easy, too, to see, and not useless to observe, the necessary connexion between these strange measures; each was an inevitable consequence of the antecedent one; and all of the first, which fixed a price upon bread so different to that which would have resulted from the real state of things. Such a provision ever has, and ever must have, appeared to the multitude as consistent with justice, as simple and easy of execution: hence, it is quite natural that, in the deprivations and grievances of a famine, they should desire it, implore it, and, if they can, enforce it. In proportion, then, as the consequences begin to be felt, it is necessary that they whose duty it is should provide a remedy for each, by a regulation, prohibiting men to do what they were impelled to do by the preceding one. We may be permitted to remark here in passing a singular coincidence. In a country and at a period by no means remote, a period the most clamorous and most renowned of modern history, in similar circumstances, similar provisions obtained, (the same, we might almost say, in substance, with the sole



difference of proportions, and in nearly the same succession;) they obtained, in spite of the march of intellect, and the knowledge which had spread over Europe, and in that country, perhaps, more than any other; and this, principally, because the great mass of the people, whom this knowledge had not yet reached, could, in the long run, make their judgment prevail, and, as it was there said, compel the hands of those who made the laws.

But to return to our subject. On a review of the circumstances, there were two principal fruits of the insurrection: destruction and actual loss of provision, in the insurrection itself, and a consumption, while the tariff lasted, immense, immeasurable, and, so to say, jovial, which rapidly diminished the small quantity of grain that was to have sufficed till the next harvest. To these general effects may be added, the punishment of four of the populace, who were hung as ringleaders of the tumult, two before the bakehouse of the Crutches, and two at the end of the street where the house of the superintendent of provisions was situated.

As to the rest, the historical accounts of those times have been written so much at random, that no information is to be found as to how and when this arbitrary tariff ceased. If, in the failure of positive notices, we may be allowed to form a conjecture, we are inclined to believe that it was withdrawn shortly before, or soon after, the 24th December, which was the day of the execution. As to the proclamations, after the last we have quoted, of the 22d of the same month, we find no more on the subject of provisions; whether it be that they have perished, or have escaped our researches, or, finally, that the government discouraged, if not instructed, by the inefficacy of these its remedies, and quite overwhelmed with different matters, abandoned them to their own course. We find, indeed, in the records of



more than one historian, (inclined, as they were, rather to describe great events, than to note the causes and progress of them,) a picture of the country, and chiefly of the city, in the already advanced winter, and following spring, when the cause of the evil, the disproportion, *i. e.* between food and the demand for it, (which, far from being removed, was even increased, by the remedies which temporarily suspended its effects,) when the true cause, I say, of the scarcity, or, to speak more correctly, the scarcity itself, was operating without a check, and exerting its full force. It was not even checked by the introduction of a sufficient supply of corn from without, to which remedy were opposed the insufficiency of public and private means, the poverty of the surrounding countries, the prevailing famine, the tediousness and restrictions of commerce, and the laws themselves, tending to the production and violent maintenance of moderate prices. We will give a sketch of the mournful picture.

At every step, the shops closed; manufactories for the most part deserted; the streets presenting an indescribable spectacle, an incessant train of miseries, a perpetual abode of sorrows. Professed beggars of long standing, now become the smallest number, mingled and lost in a new swarm, and sometimes reduced to contend for alms with those from whom, in former days, they had been accustomed to receive them. Apprentices and clerks dismissed by shopkeepers and merchants, who, when their daily profits diminished, or entirely failed, were living sparingly on their savings, or on their capital; shopkeepers and merchants themselves, to whom the cessation of business had brought failure and ruin; workmen, in every trade and manufacture, the commonest as well as the most refined, the most necessary as well as those more subservient to luxury, wandering from door to door, and from street



to street, leaning against the corners, stretched upon the pavement, along the houses and churches, begging piteously, or hesitating between want and a still unsubdued shame, emaciated, weak, and trembling, from long fasting, and the cold that pierced through their tattered and scanty garments, which still, however, in many instances, retained traces of having been once in a better condition; as their present idleness and despondency ill disguised indications of former habits of industry and courage. Mingled in the deplorable throng, and forming no small part of it, were servants dismissed by their masters, who either had sunk from mediocrity into poverty, or, otherwise, from wealthy and noble citizens, had become unable, in such a year, to maintain their accustomed pomp of retinue. And for each one, so to say, of these different needy objects, was a number of others, accustomed, in part, to live by their gains; children, women, and aged relatives, grouped around their old supporters, or dispersed in search of relief elsewhere.

There were, also, easily distinguishable by their tangled locks, by the relics of their showy dress, or even by something in their carriage and gestures, and by that expression which habits impress upon the countenance, the more marked and distinct as the habits are strange and unusual,—many of that vile race of bravoës, who, having lost in the common calamity their wickedly-acquired subsistence, now went about imploring it for charity. Subdued by hunger, contending with others only in entreaties, and reduced in person,—they dragged themselves along through the streets, which they had so often traversed with a lofty brow, and a suspicious and ferocious look, dressed in sumptuous and fantastic liveries, furnished with rich arms, plumed, decked out, and perfumed; and humbly extended the hand which had so often



been insolently raised to threaten, or treacherously, to wound.

But the most frequent, the most squalid, the most hideous spectacle, was that of the country people, alone, in couples, or even in entire families; husbands and wives, with infants in their arms, or tied up in a bundle upon their backs, with children dragged along by the hand, or with old people behind. Some there were who, having had their houses invaded and pillaged by the soldiery, had fled thither, either as residents or passengers, in a kind of desperation; and among these there were some who displayed stronger incentives to compassion, and greater distinction in misery, in the scars and bruises from the wounds they had received in the defence of their few remaining provisions; while others gave way to a blind and brutal licentiousness. Others, again, unreached by that particular scourge, but driven from their homes by those two, from which the remotest corner was not exempt, sterility and prices more exorbitant than ever, to meet what were called the necessities of war, had come, and were continually pouring into the city, as to the ancient seat and ultimate asylum of plenty and pious munificence. The newly arrived might be distinguished, not only by a hesitating step, and novel air, but still more by a look of angry astonishment, at finding such an accumulation, such an excess, such a rivalry of misery, in a place where they had hoped to appear singular objects of compassion, and to attract to themselves all assistance and notice. The others, who, for more or less time, had haunted the streets of the city, prolonging life by the scanty food obtained, as it were, by chance, in such a disparity between the supply and the demand, bore expressed in their looks and carriage still deeper and more anxious consternation. Various in dress, (or rather rags,) as well as appearance, in the midst of the common pros-



tration, there were the pale faces of the marshy districts, the bronzed countenances of the open and hilly country, and the ruddy complexion of the mountaineer, all alike wasted and emaciated, with sunken eyes, a stare between sternness and idiocy, matted locks, and long and ghastly beards; bodies, once plump and inured to fatigue, now exhausted by want; shrivelled skin on their parched arms, legs, and bony breasts, which appeared through their disordered and tattered garments; while different from, but not less melancholy than, this spectacle of wasted vigour, was that of a more quickly subdued nature; of languor, and a more self-abandoning debility, in the weaker sex and age.

Here and there, in the streets and cross-ways, along the walls, and under the eaves of the houses, were layers of trampled straw and stubble, mixed with dirty rags. Yet such revolting filth was the gift and provision of charity; they were places of repose prepared for some of those miserable wretches, where they might lay their heads at night. Occasionally, even during the day, some one might be seen lying there, whom faintness and abstinence had robbed of breath, and the power of supporting the weight of his body. Sometimes these wretched couches bore a corpse; sometimes a poor exhausted creature would suddenly sink to the ground, and remain a lifeless body upon the pavement.

Bending over some of these prostrated sufferers, a neighbour or passer-by might frequently be seen, attracted by a sudden impulse of compassion. In some places assistance was tendered, organized with more distant foresight, and proceeding from a hand rich in the means, and experienced in the exercise, of doing good on a large scale;—the hand of the good Federigo. He had made choice of six priests, whose ready and persevering charity was united with, and ministered to by, a robust constitution; these he divided into pairs,



and assigned to each a third part of the city to perambulate, followed by porters laden with various kinds of food, together with other more effective and more speedy restoratives, and clothing. Every morning these three pairs dispersed themselves through the streets in different directions, approached those whom they found stretched upon the ground, and administered to each the assistance he was capable of receiving. Some in the agonies of death, and no longer able to partake of nourishment, received at their hands the last succours and consolations of religion. To those whom food might still benefit, they dispensed soup, eggs, bread, or wine; while to others, exhausted by longer abstinence, they offered jellies and stronger wines, reviving them first, if need were, with cordials and powerful acids. At the same time they distributed garments to those who were most indecorously and miserably clothed.

Nor did their assistance end here: it was the good bishop's wish that, at least where it could be extended, efficacious and more permanent relief should be administered. Those poor creatures, who felt sufficiently strengthened by the first remedies to stand up and walk, were also provided, by the same kindly ministry, with a little money, that returning need, and the failure of further succour, might not bring them again immediately into their first condition; for the rest, they sought shelter and maintenance in some of the neighbouring houses. Those among the inhabitants who were well off in the world, afforded hospitality out of charity, and on the recommendation of the Cardinal; and where there was the will, without the means, the priests requested that the poor creature might be received as a boarder, agreed upon the terms, and immediately defrayed a part of the expense. They then gave notice of those who were thus lodged to the parish priests, that they might go to see them; and they themselves would also return to visit them.



It is unnecessary to say that Federigo did not confine his care to this extremity of suffering, nor wait till the evil had reached its height, before exerting himself. His ardent and versatile charity must feel all, be employed in all, hasten where it could not anticipate, and take, so to say, as many forms as there were varieties of need. In fact, by bringing together all his means, saving with still more rigorous economy, and applying sums destined to other purposes of charity, now, alas! rendered of secondary importance, he had tried every method of making money, to be expended entirely in alleviating poverty. He made large purchases of corn, which he despatched to the most indigent parts of his diocese; and as the succours were far from equalling the necessity, he also sent plentiful supplies of salt, "with which," says Ripamonti, relating the circumstances, "the herbs of the field, and bark from the trees, might be converted into human sustenance." He also distributed corn and money to the clergy of the city; he himself visited it by districts, dispensing alms; he relieved in secret many destitute families; in the archiepiscopal palace large quantities of rice were daily cooked; and according to the account of a contemporary writer (the physician, Alessandro Tadino, in his *Ragguaglio*, which we shall frequently have occasion to quote in the sequel), two thousand porringers of this food were here distributed every morning.

But these fruits of charity, which we may certainly specify as wonderful, when we consider that they proceeded from one individual, and from his sole resources (for Federigo habitually refused to be made a dispenser of the liberality of others), these, together with the bounty of other private persons, if not so copious, at least more numerous, and the subsidies granted by the Council of the *Decurioni* to meet this emergency, the dispensation of which was committed to the Board of



Provision, were, after all, in comparison of the demand, scarce and inadequate. While some few mountaineers and inhabitants of the vallies, who were ready to die of hunger, had their lives prolonged by the Cardinal's assistance, others arrived at the extremest verge of starvation; the former, having consumed their measured supplies, returned to the same state; in other parts, not forgotten, but considered as less straitened by a charity which was compelled to make distinctions, the sufferings became fatal; in every direction they perished, from every direction they flocked to the city. Here two thousand, we will say, of famishing creatures, the strongest and most skilful in surmounting competition, and making way for themselves, obtained, perhaps, a bowl of soup, so as not to die that day; but many more thousands remained behind, envying those, shall we say, more fortunate ones, when among them who remained behind were often their wives, children, or parents? And while, in two or three parts of the city, some of the most destitute and reduced were raised from the ground, revived, recovered, and provided for, for some time, in a hundred other quarters, many more sank, languished, or even expired, without assistance, without alleviation.

Throughout the day a confused humming of lamentable entreaties was to be heard in the streets; at night, a murmur of groans, broken now and then by howls suddenly bursting upon the ear, by loud and long accents of complaint, or by deep tones of invocation, terminating in wild shrieks.

It is worthy of remark, that in such an extremity of want, in such a variety of complaints, not one attempt was ever made, not one rumour ever raised, to bring about an insurrection: at least, we find not the least mention of such a thing. Yet, among those who lived and died in this way, there was a great number of men



brought up to anything rather than patient endurance ; there were, indeed, in hundreds, those very same individuals who, on St. Martin's-day, had made themselves so sensibly felt. Nor must it be imagined that the example of those four unhappy men, who bore in their own persons the penalty of all, was what now kept them in awe : what force could, not the sight, but the remembrance, of punishments have, on the minds of a dispersed and reunited multitude, who saw themselves condemned, as it were, to a prolonged punishment, which they were already suffering ? But so constituted are we mortals in general, that we rebel indignantly and violently against medium evils, and bow in silence under extreme ones ; we bear, not with resignation, but stupefaction, the weight of what at first we had called insupportable.

The void daily created by mortality in this deplorable multitude, was every day more than replenished : there was an incessant concourse, first, from the neighbouring towns, then from all the country, then from the cities of the state, to the very borders, even, of others. And in the meanwhile, old inhabitants were every day leaving Milan ; some to withdraw from the sight of so much suffering ; others, being driven from the field, so to say, by new competitors for support, in a last desperate attempt to find sustenance elsewhere, anywhere—anywhere, at least, where the crowds and rivalry in begging were not so dense and importunate. These oppositely-bound travellers met each other on their different routes, all spectacles of horror, and disastrous omens of the fate that awaited them at the end of their respective journeys. They prosecuted, however, the way they had once undertaken, if no longer with the hope of changing their condition, at least not to return to a scene which had become odious to them, and to avoid the sight of a place where they had been reduced to despair. Some,



even, whose last vital powers were destroyed by abstinence, sank down by the way, and were left where they expired, still more fatal tokens to their brethren in condition,—an object of horror, perhaps of reproach, to other passengers. “I saw,” writes Ripamonti, “lying in the road surrounding the wall, the corpse of a woman . . . . Half-eaten grass was hanging out of her mouth, and her contaminated lips still made almost a convulsive effort . . . . She had a bundle at her back, and, secured by bands to her bosom, hung an infant, which with bitter cries was calling for the breast . . . . Some compassionate persons had come up, who, raising the miserable little creature from the ground, brought it some sustenance, thus fulfilling in a measure the first maternal office.”

The contrast of gay clothing and rags, of superfluity and misery, the ordinary spectacle of ordinary times, had, in these peculiar ones, entirely ceased. Rags and misery had invaded almost every rank; and what now at all distinguished them was but an appearance of frugal mediocrity. The nobility were seen walking in becoming and modest, or even dirty and shabby, clothing; some, because the common causes of misery had affected their fortunes to this degree, or given a finishing hand to fortunes already much dilapidated; others, either from fear of provoking public desperation by display, or from a feeling of shame at thus insulting public calamity. Petty tyrants, once hated and looked upon with awe, and accustomed to wander about with an insolent train of bravoës at their heels, now walked almost unattended, crest-fallen, and with a look which seemed to offer and entreat peace. Others who, in prosperity also, had been of more humane disposition and more civil bearing, appeared nevertheless confused, distracted, and, as it were, overpowered by the continual view of a calamity, which excluded not only the possibility of relief,



but, we may almost say, the powers of commiseration. They who were able to afford any assistance, were obliged to make a melancholy choice between hunger and hunger, between extremity and extremity. And no sooner was a compassionate hand seen to drop anything into the hand of a wretched beggar, than a strife immediately rose between the other miserable wretches; those who still retained a little strength, pressed forward to solicit with more importunity; the feeble, aged people, and children, extended their emaciated hands; mothers, from behind, raised and held out their weeping infants, miserably clad in their tattered swaddling-clothes, and reclining languidly in their arms.

Thus passed the winter and the spring: for some time the Board of Health had been remonstrating with the Board of Provision, on the danger of contagion which threatened the city from so much suffering accumulated in, and spread throughout it; and had proposed, that all the vagabond mendicants should be collected together into the different hospitals. While this plan was being debated upon and approved; while the means, methods, and places, were being devised to put it into effect, corpses multiplied in the streets, every day bringing additional numbers; and in proportion to this, followed all the other concomitants of loathsomeness, misery, and danger. It was proposed by the Board of Provision, as more practicable and expeditious, to assemble all the mendicants, healthy or diseased, in one place, the Lazzeretto, and there to feed and maintain them at the public expense; and this expedient was resolved upon, in spite of the Board of Health, which objected that, in such an assemblage, the evil would only be increased which they wished to obviate.

The Lazzeretto at Milan (perchance this story should fall into the hands of any one who does not know it, either by sight or description), is a quadrilateral, and



almost equilateral enclosure, outside the city, to the left of the gate called the *Porta Orientale*, and separated from the bastions by the width of the fosse, a road of circumvallation, and a smaller moat running round the building itself. The two larger sides extend to about the length of five hundred paces; the other two, perhaps, fifteen less; all, on the outside, divided into little rooms on the ground-floor; while, running round three sides of the interior, is a continuous, vaulted portico, supported by small light pillars. The number of the rooms was once two hundred and eighty-eight, some larger than others; but in our days, a large aperture made in the middle, and a smaller one in one corner of the side that flanks the highway, have destroyed I know not how many. At the period of our story there were only two entrances, one in the centre of the side which looked upon the city-wall, the other facing it in the opposite side. In the midst of the clear and open space within, rose a small octagonal temple, which is still in existence. The primary object of the whole edifice, begun in the year 1489, with a private legacy, and afterwards continued with the public money, and that of other testators and donors, was, as the name itself denotes, to afford a place of refuge, in cases of necessity, to such as were ill of the plague; which, for some time before that epoch, and for a long while after it, usually appeared two, four, six, or eight times a century, now in this, now in that European country, sometimes taking a great part of it, sometimes even traversing the whole, so to say, from one end to the other. At the time of which we are speaking, the *Lazzeretto* was merely used as a repository for goods suspected of conveying infection.

To prepare it on this occasion for its new destination, the usual forms were rapidly gone through; and having hastily made the necessary cleansings and prescribed



experiments, all the goods were immediately liberated. Straw was spread out in every room, purchases were made of provisions, of whatever kind and in whatever quantities they could be procured; and, by a public edict, all beggars were invited to take shelter there.

Many willingly accepted the offer; all those who were lying ill in the streets or squares were carried thither; and in a few days there were altogether more than three thousand who had taken refuge there. But far more were they who remained behind. Whether it were that each one expected to see others go, and hoped that there would thus be a smaller party left to share the relief which could be obtained in the city, or from a natural repugnance to confinement, or from the distrust felt by the poor of all that is proposed to them by those who possess wealth or power (a distrust always proportioned to the common ignorance of those who feel it and those who inspire it—to the number of the poor, and the strictness of the regulations), or from the actual knowledge of what the offered benefit was in reality, or whether it were all these put together, or whatever else it might be, certain it is that the greater number, paying no attention to the invitation, continued to wander about, begging through the city. This being perceived, it was considered advisable to pass from invitation to force. Bailiffs were sent round, who drove all the mendicants to the *Lazzeretto*, and even brought those bound who made any resistance; for each one of whom a premium of ten *soldi*\* was assigned to them; so true is it that, even in the scarcest times, public money may always be found to be employed foolishly. And though, as it had been imagined, and even expressly intended by the provision, a certain number of beggars made their escape from the city to go and live or die elsewhere, if it were only in freedom, yet the compulsion was such,

\* Tenpence.



that in a short time the number of refugees, what with guests and prisoners, amounted to nearly ten thousand.

We must naturally suppose that the women and children were lodged in separate quarters, though the records of the time make no mention of it. Regulations, besides, and provisions for the maintenance of good order, would certainly not be wanting; but the reader may imagine what kind of order could be established and maintained, especially in those times, and under such circumstances, in so vast and diversified an assemblage, where the unwilling inmates associated with the willing,—those to whom mendicity was a mournful necessity, and subject of shame, with those whose trade and custom it had long been; many who had been trained to honest industry in the fields or warehouses, with many others who had been brought up in the streets, taverns, or some other vile resorts, to idleness, roguery, scoffing, and violence.

How they fared all together for lodging and food, might be sadly conjectured, had we no positive information on the subject; but we have it. They slept crammed and heaped together, by twenty and thirty in each little cell, or lying under the porticoes, on pallets of putrid and fetid straw, or even on the bare ground: it was ordered, indeed, that the straw should be fresh and abundant, and frequently changed; but, in fact, it was scarce, bad, and never renewed. There were orders, likewise, that the bread should be of a good quality; for what administration ever decreed that bad commodities should be manufactured and dispensed? But how obtain, under the existing circumstances, and in such confusion, what in ordinary cases could not have been procured, even for a less enormous demand? It was affirmed, as we find in the records of the times, that the bread of the *Lazzeretto* was adulterated with heavy but unnutritious materials; and it is too likely that this



was not a mere unfounded complaint. There was also a great deficiency of water, that is to say, of wholesome spring-water: the common beverage must have been from the moat that washed the walls of the enclosure, shallow, slow, in places even muddy; and become, too, what the use and the vicinity of such and so vast a multitude must have rendered it.

To all these causes of mortality, the more effective as they acted upon diseased or enfeebled bodies, was added the most unpropitious season; obstinate rains, followed by a drought still more obstinate, and with it, an anticipated and violent heat. To these evils were added a keen sense of them; the tedium and frenzy of captivity; a longing to return to old habits; grief for departed friends; anxious remembrances of absent ones; disgust and dread, inspired by the misery of others; and many other feelings of despair, or madness, either brought with them, or first awakened there; together with the apprehension and constant spectacle of death, which was rendered frequent by so many causes, and had become itself a new and powerful cause. Nor is it to be wondered at, that mortality increased and prevailed in this confinement, to such a degree, as to assume the aspect, and with many, the name, of pestilence. Whether it were that the union and augmentation of all these causes only served to increase the activity of a merely epidemic influenza, or (as it seems frequently to happen in less severe and prolonged famines,) that a real contagion had gained ground there, which, in bodies disposed and prepared for it by the scarcity and bad quality of food, by unwholesome air, by uncleanness, by exhaustion, and by consternation, found its own temperature, so to say, and its own season;—the conditions, in short, necessary for its birth, preservation, and multiplication; (if one unskilled in these matters may be allowed to put forth these sentiments, after the



hypothesis propounded by certain doctors of medicine, and re-propounded at length, with many arguments, and much caution, by one as diligent as he is talented;)\* or whether, again, the contagion first broke out in the Lazzeretto itself, as, according to an obscure and inexact account, it seems was thought by the physicians of the Board of Health; or whether it were actually in existence, and hovering about before that time, (which seems, perhaps, the most likely, if we recollect that the scarcity was already universal, and of long date, and the mortality frequent,) and that, when once introduced there, it spread with fresh and terrible rapidity, owing to the accumulation of bodies, which were rendered still more disposed to receive it, from the increasing efficacy of the other causes; whichever of these conjectures be the true one, the daily number of deaths in the Lazzeretto shortly exceeded a hundred.

While all the rest here was languor, suffering, fear, lamentations, and horror, in the Board of Provision there was shame, stupefaction, and incertitude. They consulted and listened to the advice of the Board of Health, and could find no other course than to undo what had been done with so much preparation, so much expense, and so much unwillingness. They opened the Lazzeretto, and dismissed all who had any strength remaining, who made their escape with a kind of furious joy. The city once more resounded with its former clamour, but more feeble and interrupted; it again saw that more diminished, and "more miserable" crowd, says Ripamonti, when remembering how it had been thus diminished. The sick were transported to Santa Maria della Stella, at that time an hospital for beggars; and here the greater part perished.

In the meanwhile, however, the blessed fields began

\* On the Spotted Plague . . . and on other contagions in general, by the learned F. Enrico Acerbi, Ch. iii. § 1 and 2.



to whiten. The mendicants from the country set off, each one to his own parts, for this much-desired harvest. The good Federigo dismissed them with a last effort and new invention of charity; to every countryman who presented himself at the archiepiscopal palace, he gave a *giulio*,\* and a reaping sickle.

With the harvest, the scarcity at length ceased; the mortality, however, whether epidemic or contagious, though decreasing from day to day, was protracted even into the season of autumn. It was on the point of vanishing, when, behold, a new scourge made its appearance.

Many important events, of that kind which are more peculiarly denominated historical facts, had taken place during this interval. The Cardinal de Richelieu having, as we have said, taken La Rochelle, and having patched up an accommodation with the king of England, had proposed and carried by his potential voice in the French Council, that some effectual succour should be rendered to the Duke of Nevers, and had, at the same time, persuaded the king himself to conduct the expedition in person. While making the necessary preparations, the Count de Nassau, imperial commissary, suggested at Mantua to the new duke, that he should give up the states into Ferdinand's hands, or that the latter would send an army to occupy them. The Duke, who, in more desperate circumstances, had scorned to accept so hard and little-to-be-trusted a condition, and encouraged now by the approaching aid from France, scorned it so much the more; but in terms in which the *no* was wrapped up and kept at a distance, as much as might be, and with even more apparent, but less costly, proposals of submission. The commissary took his departure, threatening that they would come to decide it by force. In the month of March, the Cardinal Riche-

\* A piece of money, in value about sixpence sterling.



lieu made a descent, with the king, at the head of an army; he demanded a passage from the Duke of Savoy, entered upon a treaty, which, however, was not concluded; and after an encounter, in which the French had the advantage, again negotiated and concluded an agreement, in which the Duke stipulated, among other things, that Cordova should raise the siege of Casale; pledging himself, in case of his refusal, to join with the French, for the invasion of the Duchy of Milan. Don Gonzalo, reckoning it, too, a very cheap bargain, withdrew his army from Casale, which was immediately entered by a body of French to reinforce the garrison.

It was on this occasion that Achillini addressed to King Louis his famous sonnet:—

“ Sudate, o, fochi, a preparar metalli;”

and another, in which he exhorted him to repair immediately to the deliverance of Terra-Santa. But there is a fatal decree, that the advice of poets should not be followed; and if any doings happen to be found in history in conformity with their suggestions, we may safely affirm that they were resolved upon beforehand. The Cardinal de Richelieu determined, instead, to return to France, on affairs which he considered more urgent. Girolamo Soranzo, the Venetian envoy, urged, indeed, much stronger reasons to divert this resolution; but the King and the Cardinal, paying no more attention to his prose than to the verses of Achillini, returned with the greater part of the army, leaving only six thousand men in Susa, to occupy the pass, and maintain the treaty.

While this army was retiring on one hand, that of Ferdinand, headed by the Count di Collalto, approached on the other; it invaded the country of Grisons and Valtelline, and prepared to descend upon the Milanese. Besides all the terrors to which the announcement of



such a migration gave rise, the alarming rumour got abroad, and was confirmed by express tidings, that the plague was lurking in the army, of which there were always some symptoms at that time in the German troops, according to Varchi, in speaking of that which, a century before, had been introduced into Florence by their means. Alessandro Tadino, one of the Conservators of the public health, (there were six, besides the president: four magistrates and two physicians,) was commissioned by the board, as he himself relates in his *Ragguaglio* already quoted,\* to remonstrate with the governor on the fearful danger which threatened the country, if that vast multitude obtained a passage through it to Mantua, as the report ran. From the whole behaviour of Don Gonzalo, it appears he had a great desire to make a figure in history, which, in truth, cannot avoid giving an account of some of his doings; but (as often happens) it knew not, or took no pains to record, an act of his, the most worthy of remembrance and attention—the answer he gave to the physician Tadino on this occasion. He replied, “That he knew not what to do; that the reasons of interest and reputation which had caused the march of that army, were of greater weight than the represented danger; but that, nevertheless, he must try to remedy it as well as he could, and must then trust in Providence.”

To remedy it, therefore, as well as he could, the two physicians of the Board of Health (the above-mentioned Tadino, and Senatore Settala, son of the celebrated Lodovico,) proposed in this committee to prohibit, under severe penalties, the purchase of any kind of commodities whatsoever from the soldiers who were about to pass; but it was impossible to make the president understand the

\* Account of the Origin and Daily Progress of the great Plague, communicated by infection, poison, and sorcery, which visited the City of Milan, &c.—*Milan*, 1648, p. 16.



advantage of such a regulation ; " A kind-hearted man," says Tadino,\* " who could not believe that the probability of the death of so many thousands must follow upon traffic with these people and their goods." We quote this extract, as one of the singularities of those times : for certainly, since there have been Boards of Health, no other president of one of them ever happened to use such an argument—if argument it be.

As to Don Gonzalo, this reply was one of his last performances here ; for the ill success of the war, promoted and conducted chiefly by himself, was the cause of his being removed from his post, in the course of the summer. On his departure from Milan, a circumstance occurred which, by some contemporary writer, is noticed as the first of that kind that ever happened there to a man of his rank. On leaving the palace, called the City Palace, surrounded by a great company of noblemen, he encountered a crowd of the populace, some of whom preceded him in the way, and others followed behind, shouting, and upbraiding him with imprecations, as being the cause of the famine they had suffered, by the permission, they said, he had given to carry corn and rice out of the city. At his carriage, which was following the party, they hurled worse missiles than words ; stones, bricks, cabbage-stalks, rubbish of all sorts—the usual ammunition, in short, of these expeditions. Repulsed by the guards, they drew back ; but only to run, augmented on the way by many fresh parties, to prepare themselves at the Porta Ticinese, through which gate he would shortly have to pass in his carriage. When the equipage made its appearance, followed by many others, they showered down upon them all, both with hands and slings, a perfect torrent of stones. The matter, however, went no further.

The Marquis Ambrogio Spinola was despatched to



supply his place, whose name had already acquired, in the wars of Flanders, the military renown it still retains.

In the meanwhile, the German army had received definitive orders to march forward to Mantua, and, in the month of September, they entered the Duchy of Milan.

The military forces in those days were still chiefly composed of volunteers, enlisted under commanders by profession, sometimes by commission from this or that prince; sometimes, also, on their own account, that they might dispose of themselves and their men together. These were attracted to this employment, much less by the pay, than by the hopes of plunder, and all the gratifications of military license. There was no fixed and universal discipline in an army so composed; nor was it possible easily to bring into concordance the independent authority of so many different leaders. These too, in particular, were not very nice on the subject of discipline, nor, had they been willing, can we see how they could have succeeded in establishing and maintaining it; for soldiers of this kind would either have revolted against an innovating commander, who should have taken it into his head to abolish pillage, or, at least, would have left him by himself to defend his colours. Besides, as the princes who hired these troops sought rather to have hands enough to secure their undertakings, than to proportion the number to their means of remuneration, which were generally very scanty, so the payments were for the most part late, on account, and by little at a time; and the spoils of the countries they were making war upon, or over-ran, became, as it were, a compensation tacitly accorded to them. It was a saying of Wallenstein's, scarcely less celebrated than his name, that it was easier to maintain an army of a hundred thousand men, than one of twelve thousand. And that of which we are speaking, was, in



great part, composed of men who, under his command, had desolated Germany in that war, so celebrated among other wars both for itself and for its effects, which afterwards took its name from the thirty years of its duration ; it was then the eleventh year. There was, besides, his own special regiment, conducted by one of his lieutenants ; of the other leaders, the greatest part had commanded under him ; and there were, also, more than one of those who, four years afterwards, had to assist in bringing him to that evil end which everybody knows.

There were twenty-eight thousand foot, and seven thousand horse ; and in descending from Valtelline to reach the territory of Mantua, they had to follow, more or less closely, the course of the Adda where it forms two branches of a lake, then again as a river to its junction with the Po, and afterwards for some distance along the banks of this river ; on the whole eight days' march in the Duchy of Milan.

A great part of the inhabitants retired to the mountains, taking with them their most valuable effects, and driving their cattle before them ; others stayed behind, either to tend upon some sick person, or to defend their houses from the flames, or to keep an eye upon precious things which they had concealed under ground ; some because they had nothing to lose ; and a few villains, also, to make acquisitions. When the first detachment arrived at the village where they were to halt, they quickly spread themselves through this and the neighbouring ones, and plundered them directly ; all that could be eaten or carried off, disappeared : not to speak of the destruction of the rest, of the fields laid waste, of the houses given to the flames, the blows, the wounds, the rapes, committed. All the expedients, all the defences employed to save property, often proved useless, sometimes even more injurious to the owners. The soldiers, far more practised in the stratagems of



this kind of war, too, rummaged every corner of the dwellings; tore down walls; easily discovered in the gardens the newly-disturbed soil; penetrated even to the hills, to carry off the cattle; went into caves, under the guidance of some villain, as we have said, in search of any wealthy inhabitant who might be concealed there; despoiled his person, dragged him to his house, and, by dint of threats and blows, compelled him to point out his hidden treasure.

At length, however, they took their departure, and the distant sound of drums or trumpets gradually died away on the ear; this was followed by a few hours of death-like calm: and then a new hateful clashing of arms, a new hateful rumbling, announced another squadron. These, no longer finding anything to plunder, applied themselves with the more fury to make destruction and havoc of the rest, burning furniture, door-posts, beams, casks, wine-vats, and sometimes even the houses; they seized and ill-used the inhabitants with double ferocity;—and so on, from worse to worse, for twenty days; for into this number of detachments the army was divided.

Colico was the first town of the Duchy invaded by these fiends; afterwards, they threw themselves into Bellano; thence they entered and spread themselves through Valsassina, and then poured down into the territory of Lecco.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.



AND here we find that persons of our acquaintance were sharers in the wide-spread alarm.

One who saw not Don Abbondio, the day that the news were suddenly spread of the descent of the army, of its near approach, and destructive proceedings, knows very little of what embarrassment and consternation really are. They are coming! there are thirty, there are forty, there are fifty thousand! they are devils, heretics, antichrists! they've sacked Cortenuova! they've set fire to Primaluna! they've devastated Introbbio, Pasturo, Barsio! they've been seen at Balabbio! they'll be here to-morrow!—such were the reports that passed from mouth to mouth; some hurrying to and fro, others standing in little parties; together with tumultuous consultations, hesitation whether to fly or



remain, the women assembling in groups, and all utterly at a loss what to do. Don Abbondio, who had resolved before any one else, and more than any one else, to fly, by any possible mode of flight, and to any conceivable place of retreat, discovered insuperable obstacles and fearful dangers. "What shall I do!" exclaimed he: "Where shall I go?" The mountains, letting alone the difficulty of getting there, were not secure: it was well known that the German foot soldiers climbed them like cats, where they had the least indication or hope of finding booty. The lake was wide; there was a very high wind: besides, the greater part of the boatmen, fearing they might be compelled to convey soldiers or baggage, had retreated with their boats to the opposite side: the few that had remained, were gone off overladen with people, and, distressed by their own weight and the violence of the storm, were considered in greater peril every moment. It was impossible to find a vehicle, horse, or conveyance of any kind, to carry him away from the road the army had to traverse; and on foot Don Abbondio could not manage any great distance, and feared being overtaken by the way. The confines of the Bergamascan territory were not so very far off, but that his limbs could have borne him thither at a stretch; but a report had been already spread, that a squadron of *cappelletti* had been despatched from Bergamo in haste, who were occupying the borders to keep the German troops in order; and those were neither more nor less devils incarnate than these, and on their part did the worst they could. The poor man ran through the house with eyes starting from his head, and half out of his senses; he kept following Perpetua to concert some plan with her; but Perpetua, busied in collecting the most valuable household goods, and hiding them under the floor, or in any other out-of-the-way place, pushed by hurriedly, eager and pre-



occupied, with her hands or arms full, and replied: "I shall have done directly putting these things away safely, and then we'll do what others do." Don Abbondio would have detained her, and discussed with her the different courses to be adopted; but she, what with her business, and her hurry, and the fear which she, too, felt within, and the vexation which that of her master excited, was, in this juncture, less tractable than she had ever been before. "Others do the best they can; and so will we. I beg your pardon: but you are good for nothing but to hinder one. Do you think that others haven't skins to save, too? That the soldiers are only coming to fight with you? You might even lend a hand at such a time, instead of coming crying and bothering at one's feet." With these and similar answers, she at length got rid of him, having already determined, when this bustling operation was finished as well as might be, to take him by the arm like a child, and to drag him along to one of the mountains. Left thus alone, he retreated to the window, looked, listened; or, seeing some one passing, cried out in a half-crying, and half-reproachful tone: "Do your poor Curate this kindness, to seek some horse, some mule, some ass, for him! Is it possible that nobody will help me! Oh, what people! Wait for me, at least, that I may go with you! wait till you are fifteen or twenty, to take me with you, that I may not be quite forsaken! Will you leave me in the hand of dogs? Don't you know they are nearly all Lutherans, who think it a meritorious deed to murder a priest? Will you leave me here to be martyred? Oh, what a set! Oh, what a set!"

But to whom did he address these words? To men who were passing along bending under the weight of their humble furniture, and their thoughts turned towards that which they were leaving at home exposed to plunder; one driving before him a young cow, an-



other dragging after him his children, also laden as heavily as they could bear, while his wife carried in her arms such as were unable to walk. Some went on their way without replying or looking up; others said, "Eh, sir, you too must do as you can! happy you, who have no family to think for! you must help yourself, and do the best you can."

"Oh, poor me!" exclaimed Don Abbondio; "oh, what people! what hard hearts! There's no charity: everybody thinks of himself; but nobody'll think for me!" And he set off again in search of Perpetua.

"Oh, I just wanted you!" said she. "Your money?"

"What shall we do?"

"Give it me, and I'll go and bury it in the garden here by the house, together with the silver, and knives and forks."

"But . . . ."

"But, but; give it here; keep a few pence for whatever may happen; and then leave it to me."

Don Abbondio obeyed, went to his trunk, took out his little treasure, and handed it to Perpetua, who said: "I'm going to bury it in the garden, at the foot of the fig-tree;" and went out. Soon afterwards she re-appeared with a packet in her hand, containing some provision for the appetite, and a small empty basket, in the bottom of which she hastily placed a little linen for herself and her master, saying, at the same time, "You'll carry the breviary, at least!"

"But where are we going?"

"Where are all the rest going? First of all, we'll go into the street; and there we shall see and hear what's best to be done."

At this moment Agnese entered, also carrying a basket slung over her shoulder, and with the air of one who comes to make an important proposal.

Agnese herself, equally resolved not to await guests



of this sort, alone as she was in the house, and with a little of the money of the Unnamed still left, had been hesitating for some time about a place of retreat. The remainder of those *scudi*, which in the months of famine had been of such use to her, was now the principal cause of her anxiety and irresolution, from having heard how, in the already invaded countries, those who had any money had found themselves in a worse condition than anybody else, exposed alike to the violence of the strangers and the treachery of their fellow-countrymen. True it was that she had confided to no one, save Don Abbondio, the wealth that had fallen, so to say, into her lap ; to him she had applied, from time to time, to change her a *scudo* into silver, always leaving him something to give to some one who was poorer than herself. But hidden riches, particularly with one who is not accustomed to handle much, keep the possessor in continual suspicion of the suspicion of others. While, however, she was going about hiding here and there, as she best could, what she could not manage to take with her, and thinking about the *scudi*, which she kept sewn up in her stays, she remembered that, together with them, the Unnamed had sent her the most ample proffers of service ; she remembered what she had heard related about his castle's being in so secure a situation, where nothing could reach it, against its owner's will, but birds ; and she resolved to go and seek an asylum there. Wondering how she was to make herself known to the Signor, Don Abbondio quickly occurred to her mind ; who, after the conversation we have related with the Archbishop, had always shown her particular marks of kindness ; the more heartily, as he could do so without committing himself to any one, and, the two young people being far enough off, the probability was also distant that a request would be made him which would have put this kindness to a very dangerous test. Thinking that in



such a confusion the poor man would be still more perplexed and dismayed than herself, and that this course might appear desirable also to him, she came to make the proposal. Finding him with Perpetua, she suggested it to them both together.

"What say you to it, Perpetua?" asked Don Abbondio.

"I say that it is an inspiration from Heaven, and that we mustn't lose time, but set off at once on our journey."

"And then . . . ."

"And then, and then, when we get there, we shall find ourselves very well satisfied. It is well known now that the Signor desires nothing more than to benefit his fellow-creatures; and I've no doubt he'll be glad to receive us. There, on the borders, and as it were in the air, the soldiers certainly won't come. And then, and then, we shall find something to eat there; for up in the mountains, when this little store is gone," and, so saying, she placed it in the basket upon the linen, "we should find ourselves very badly off."

"He's converted, he's really converted, isn't he?"

"Why should we doubt it any longer, after all that's known about him, nay, after what you yourself have seen?"

"And supposing we should be going to put ourselves in prison?"

"What prison? I declare, with all your silly objections, (I beg your pardon,) you'd never come to any conclusion. Well done, Agnese! it was certainly a capital thought of yours!" And setting the basket on a table, she passed her arms through the straps, and lifted it upon her back.

"Couldn't we find some man," said Don Abbondio, "who would come with us as a guard to his Curate? If we should meet any ruffians, for there are plenty of them roving about, what help could you two give me?"



“ Another plan, to waste time ! ” exclaimed Perpetua. “ To go now and look for a man, when everybody has to mind himself ! Up with you ; go and get your breviary and hat, and let us set off.”

Don Abbondio obeyed, and soon returned with the breviary under his arm, his hat on his head, and his staff in his hand ; and the three companions went out by a little door which led into the churchyard. Perpetua locked it after her, rather not to neglect an accustomed form, than from any faith she placed in bolts and door-posts, and put the key in her pocket. Don Abbondio cast a glance at the church in passing, and muttered between his teeth : “ It’s the people’s business to take care of it, for it’s they who use it. If they’ve the least love for their church, they’ll see to it ; if they’ve not, why, it’s their own look-out.”

They took the road through the fields, each silently pursuing his way, absorbed in thought on his own particular circumstances, and looking rather narrowly around ; more particularly Don Abbondio, who was in continual apprehension of the apparition of some suspicious figure, or something not to be trusted. However, they encountered no one : all the people were either in their houses to guard them, to prepare bundles, and to put away goods, or on the roads which led directly to the mountain-heights.

After heaving a few deep sighs, and then giving vent to his vexation in an interjection or two, Don Abbondio began to grumble more connectedly. He quarrelled with the duke of Nevers, who might have been enjoying himself in France, and playing the prince there, yet was determined to be duke of Mantua in spite of the world ; with the Emperor, who ought to have sense for the follies of others, to let matters take their own course, and not stand so much upon punctilio ; for, after all, he would always be Emperor, whether Titius or Sem-



pronius were duke of Mantua; and, above all, with the governor, whose business it was to do every thing he could to avert these scourges of the country, while, in fact, he was the very person to invite them — all from the pleasure he took in making war. “I wish,” said he, “that these gentry were here to see and try how pleasant it is. They will have a fine account to render! But, in the meanwhile, we have to bear it who have no blame in the matter.”

“Do let these people alone, for they’ll never come to help us,” said Perpetua. “This is some of your usual prating, (I beg your pardon,) which just comes to nothing. What rather gives me uneasiness . . . .”

“What’s the matter?”

Perpetua, who had been leisurely going over in her mind, during their walk, her hasty packing and stowing away, now began her lamentations at having forgotten such a thing, and badly concealed such another; here she had left traces which might serve as a clue to the robbers, there . . . .

“Well done!” cried Don Abbondio, gradually sufficiently relieved from fear for his life to allow of anxiety for his worldly goods and chattels: “Well done! Did you really do so? Where was your head?”

“What!” exclaimed Perpetua, coming to an abrupt pause for a moment, and resting her hands on her sides, as well as the basket she carried would allow: “What! do you begin now to scold me in this way, when it was you who almost turned my brain, instead of helping and encouraging me? I believe I’ve taken more care of the things of the house than of my own; I’d not a creature to lend me a hand; I’ve been obliged to *play the parts of both Martha and Magdalene*: if any thing goes wrong, I’ve nothing to say: I’ve done more than my duty now.”

Agnese interrupted these disputes, by beginning, in



her turn, to talk about her own grievances; she lamented not so much the trouble and damage, as finding all her hopes of soon meeting her Lucia dashed to the ground: for, the reader may remember, this was the very autumn on which they had so long calculated. It was not at all likely that Donna Prassede would come to reside in her country-house in that neighbourhood, under such circumstances: on the contrary, she would more probably have left it, had she happened to be there, as all the other residents in the country were doing.

The sight of the different places they passed brought these thoughts to Agnese's mind more vividly, and increased the ardour of her desires. Leaving the footpath through the fields, they had taken the public road, the very same along which Agnese had come when bringing home her daughter for so short a time, after having stayed with her at the tailor's. The village was already in sight.

"We will just say 'how d'ye do' to these good people," said Agnese.

"Yes, and rest there a little; for I begin to have had enough of this basket; and to get a mouthful to eat too," said Perpetua.

"On condition we don't lose time; for we are not journeying for our amusement," concluded Don Abbondio.

They were received with open arms, and welcomed with much pleasure; it reminded them of a former deed of benevolence. "Do good to as many as you can," here remarks our author, "and you will the more frequently happen to meet with countenances which bring you pleasure."

Agnese burst into a flood of tears on embracing the good woman, which was a great relief to her; and could only reply with sobs to the questions which she and her husband put about Lucia.



"She is better off than we are," said Don Abbondio ; "she's at Milan, out of all danger, and far away from these diabolical dangers."

"Are the Signor Curate, and his companion, making their escape, then ?" asked the tailor.

"Certainly," replied both master and servant, in one breath.

"Oh, how I pity you both !"

"We are on our way," said Don Abbondio, "to the Castle of \* \* \*."

"That's a very good thought ; you'll be as safe there as in Paradise."

"And you've no fear here ?" said Don Abbondio.

"I'll tell you, Signor Curate : they won't have to come here to halt, or, as you know the saying is, in polite language, *in ospitazione* : we are too much out of their road, thank Heaven. At the worst, there'll only be a little party of foragers, which God forbid !—but, in any case, there's plenty of time. We shall first hear the intelligence from the other unfortunate towns, where they go to take up their quarters."

It was determined to stop here and take a little rest ; and as it was just the dinner-hour, "My friends," said the tailor, "will do me the favour of sharing my poor table : at any rate, you will have a hearty welcome."

Perpetua said she had brought some refreshment with them ; and after exchanging a few complimentary speeches, they agreed to put all together, and dine in company.

The children gathered with great glee round their old friend Agnese. Very soon, however, the tailor desired one of his little girls (the same that had carried that gift of charity to the widow Maria ; who knows if any reader remembers it !) to go and shell a few early chest-nuts, which were deposited in one corner, and then put them to roast.



"And you," said he to a little boy, "go into the garden, and shake the peach-tree till some of the fruit falls, and bring them all here; go. And you," said he to another, "go, climb the fig-tree, and gather a few of the ripest figs. You know that business too well already." He himself went to tap a little barrel of wine; his wife to fetch a clean table-cloth; Perpetua took out the provisions; the table was spread; a napkin and earthenware plate were placed at the most honourable seat for Don Abbondio, with a knife and fork which Perpetua had in the basket; the dinner was dished, and the party seated themselves at the table, and partook of the repast, if not with great merriment, at least with much more than any of the guests had anticipated enjoying that day.

"What say you, Signor Curate, to a turn out of this sort?" said the tailor; "I could fancy I was reading the history of the Moors in France."

"What say I? To think that even this trouble should fall to my lot!"

"Well, you've chosen a good asylum," resumed his host; "people would be puzzled to get up there by force. And you'll find company there; it's already reported that many have retreated thither, and many more are daily arriving."

"I would fain hope," said Don Abbondio, "that we shall be well received. I know this brave Signor; and when I once had the pleasure of being in his company, he was so exceedingly polite."

"And he sent word to me," said Agnese, "by his most illustrious Lordship, that if ever I wanted anything, I had only to go to him."

"A great and wonderful conversion!" resumed Don Abbondio: "and does he really continue to persevere?"

"Oh yes," said the tailor; and he began to speak at some length upon the holy life of the Unnamed, and



how, from being a scourge to the country, he had become its example and benefactor.

"And all those people he kept under him . . . that household . . ." rejoined Don Abbondio, who had more than once heard something about them, but had never been sufficiently assured of the truth.

"They are most of them dismissed," replied the tailor; "and they who remain have altered their habits in a wonderful way! In short, this castle has become like the Thebaid. You, Signor, understand these things."

He then began to recall, with Agnese, the visit of the Cardinal. "A great man," said he, "a great man! Pity that he left us so hastily; for I did not, and could not, do him any honour. How often I wish I could speak to him again, a little more at my ease!"

Having left the table, he made them observe an engraved likeness of the Cardinal, which he kept hung up on one of the door-posts, in veneration for the person, and also that he might be able to say to any visitor, that the portrait did not resemble him; for he himself had had an opportunity of studying the Cardinal, close by, and at his leisure, in that very room.

"Did they mean this thing here for him?" said Agnese. "It's like him in dress; but . . ."

"It doesn't resemble him, does it?" said the tailor. "I always say so, too; but it bears his name, if nothing more; it serves as a remembrance."

Don Abbondio was in a great hurry to be going; the tailor undertook to find a conveyance to carry them to the foot of the ascent, and having gone in search of one, shortly returned to say that it was coming. Then, turning to Don Abbondio, he added, "Signor Curate, if you should ever like to take a book with you up there to pass away the time, I shall be glad to serve you in my poor way; for I sometimes amuse myself a little



with reading. They're not things to suit you, being all in the vulgar tongue; but, perhaps . . . ."

"Thank you, thank you," replied Don Abbondio; "under present circumstances, one has hardly brains enough to attend to what we are bid to read."

While offering and refusing thanks, and exchanging condolence, good wishes, invitations, and promises to make another stay there on their return, the cart arrived at the front door. Putting in their baskets, the travelling party mounted after them, and undertook, with rather more ease and tranquillity of mind, the second half of their journey.

The tailor had related the truth to Don Abbondio about the Unnamed. From the day on which we left him, he had steadily persevered in the course he had proposed to himself, atoning for wrongs, seeking peace, relieving the poor, and performing every good work for which an opportunity presented itself. The courage he had formerly manifested in offence and defence now showed itself in abstaining from both one and the other. He had laid down all his weapons, and always walked alone, willing to encounter the possible consequences of the many deeds of violence he had committed, and persuaded that it would be the commission of an additional one to employ force in defence of a life which owed so much to so many creditors; and persuaded, too, that every evil which might be done to him would be an offence offered to God, but, with respect to himself, a just retribution; and that he, above all, had no right to constitute himself a punisher of such offences. However, he had continued not less inviolate than when he had kept in readiness for his security, so many armed hands, and his own. The remembrance of his former ferocity, and the sight of his present meekness, one of which, it might have been expected, would have left so many longings for revenge, while the other rendered that revenge so



easy, conspired, instead, to procure and maintain for him an admiration, which was the principal guarantee for his safety. He was that very man whom no one could humble, and who had now humbled himself. Every feeling of rancour, therefore, formerly irritated by his contemptuous behaviour, and by the fears of others, vanished before this new humility : they whom he had offended had now obtained, beyond all expectation, and without danger, a satisfaction which they could not have promised themselves from the most complete revenge—the satisfaction of seeing such a man mourning over the wrongs he had committed, and participating, so to say, in their indignation. More than one, whose bitterest and greatest sorrow had been, for many years, that he saw no probability of ever finding himself, in any instance, stronger than this powerful oppressor, that he might revenge himself for some great injury, meeting him afterwards alone, unarmed, and with the air of one who would offer no resistance, felt only an impulse to salute him with demonstrations of respect. In his voluntary abasement, his countenance and behaviour had acquired, without his being aware of it, something more lofty and noble ; because there was in them, more clearly than ever, the absence of all fear. The most violent and pertinacious hatred felt, as it were, restrained and held in awe by the public veneration for so penitent and beneficent a man. This was carried to such a length, that he often found it difficult to avoid the public expression of it which was addressed to him, and was obliged to be careful that he did not evince too plainly in his looks and actions the inward compunction he felt, nor abase himself too much, lest he should be too much exalted. He had selected the lowest place in church, and woe to any one who should have attempted to pre-occupy it ! it would have been, as it were, usurping a post of honour. To have offended him, or even



to have treated him disrespectfully, would have appeared not so much a criminal or cowardly, as a sacrilegious act: and even they who would scarcely have been restrained by this feeling on ordinary occasions, participated in it, more or less.

These and other reasons sheltered him also from the more remote animadversions of public authority, and procured for him, even in this quarter, the security to which he himself had never given a thought. His rank and family, which had at all times been some protection to him, availed him more than ever, now that personal recommendations, the renown of his conversion, was added to his already illustrious and famous, or rather infamous, name. Magistrates and nobles publicly rejoiced with the people at the change; and it would have appeared very incongruous to come forward irritated against a man who was the subject of so many congratulations. Besides, a government occupied with a protracted, and often unprosperous, war against active and oft-renewed rebellions, would have been very well satisfied to be freed from the most indomitable and irksome, without going in search of another: the more so, as this conversion produced reparations which the authorities were not accustomed to obtain, nor even to demand. To molest a saint seemed no very good means to ward off the reproach of having never been able to repress a villain; and the example they would have made of him would have had no other effect than to dissuade others, like him, from following his example. Probably, too, the share that Cardinal Federigo had had in his conversion, and the association of his name with that of the convert, served the latter as a sacred shield. And, in the state of things and ideas in those times, in the singular relations between the ecclesiastical authority and the civil power, which so frequently contended with each other without at all aiming at



mutual destruction, nay, were always mingling expressions of acknowledgment, and protestations of deference, with hostilities, and which not unfrequently co-operated towards a common end, without ever making peace,—in such a state of things, it might almost seem, in a manner, that the reconciliation of the first carried along with it, if not the absolution, at least the forgetfulness, of the second; when the former alone had been employed to produce an effect equally desired by both.

Thus that very individual, who, had he fallen from his eminence, would have excited emulation among small and great in trampling him under foot, now, having spontaneously humbled himself to the dust, was revered by many, and spared by all.

True it is, that there were, indeed, many to whom this much-talked-of change brought anything but satisfaction: many hired perpetrators of crime, many other associates in guilt, who thereby lost a great support on which they had been accustomed to depend, and who beheld the threads of a deeply-woven plot suddenly snapped, at the moment, perhaps, when they were expecting the intelligence of its completion. But we have already seen what various sentiments were awakened by the announcement of this conversion in the ruffians who were with their master at the time, and heard it from his own lips: astonishment, grief, depression, vexation; a little, indeed, of everything, except contempt and hatred. The same was felt by the others whom he kept dispersed at different posts, and the same by his accomplices of higher rank, when they first learned the terrible tidings; and by all for the same reasons. Much hatred, however, as we find in the passage elsewhere cited from Ripamonti, fell to the share of the Cardinal Federigo. They regarded him as one who had intruded like an enemy into their affairs; the Unnamed would see to the salvation of his own



soul; and nobody had any right to complain of what he did.

From time to time, the greater part of the ruffians in his household, unable to accommodate themselves to the new discipline, and seeing no probability that it would ever change, gradually took their departure. Some went in search of other masters, and found employment, perchance, among the old friends of the patron they had left; others enlisted in some *terzo*\* of Spain or Mantua, or any other belligerent power; some infested the highways, to make war on a smaller scale, and on their own account; and others, again, contented themselves with going about as beggars at liberty. The same courses were pursued by the rest who had acted under his orders in different countries. Of those who had contrived to assimilate themselves to his new mode of life, or had embraced it of their own free will; the greater number, natives of the valley, returned to the fields, or to the trades which they had learnt in their early years, and had afterwards abandoned for a life of villany; the strangers remained in the castle as domestic servants; and both natives and strangers, as if blessed at the same time with their master, lived contentedly, as he did, neither giving nor receiving injuries, unarmed, and respected.

But when, on the descent of the German troops; several fugitives from the threatened or invaded dominions arrived at his castle to request an asylum, he, rejoiced that the weak and oppressed sought refuge within his walls, which had so long been regarded by them at a distance as an enormous scarecrow, received these exiles with expressions of gratitude rather than courtesy; he caused it to be proclaimed that his house would be open to any one who should choose to take refuge there; and soon proposed to put, not only his

\* A regiment consisting of three thousand soldiers.



castle, but the valley itself, into a state of defence, if ever any of the German or Bergamascan troops should attempt to come thither for plunder. He assembled the servants who still remained with him (like the verses of Torti, few and valiant); addressed them on the happy opportunity that God was giving both to them and himself of employing themselves for once in aid of their fellow-creatures, whom they had so often oppressed and terrified; and with that ancient tone of command which expressed a certainty of being obeyed, announced to them in general what he wished them to do, and, above all, impressed upon them the necessity of keeping a restraint over themselves, that they who took refuge there might see in them only friends and protectors. He then had brought down from one of the garrets all the fire-arms, and other warlike weapons, which had been for some time deposited there, and distributed them among his household; ordered that all the peasants and tenants of the valley, who were willing to do so, should come with arms to the castle; provided those who had none with a sufficient supply; selected some to act as officers, and placed others under their command; assigned to each his post at the entrance, and, in various parts of the valley, on the ascent, and at the gates of the castle; and established the hours and methods of relieving the guards, as in a camp, or as he had been accustomed to do in that very place during his life of rebellion.

In one corner of this garret, divided from the rest, were the arms which he alone had borne, his famous carabine, muskets, swords, pistols, huge knives, and poniards, either lying on the ground, or set up against the wall. None of the servants laid a finger on them; but they determined to ask the Signor which he wished to be brought to him. "Not one of them," replied he; and whether from a vow or intentional design, he



remained the whole time unarmed, at the head of this species of garrison.

He employed, at the same time, other men and women of his household or dependents, in preparing accommodation in the castle for as many persons as possible, in erecting bedsteads, and arranging straw beds, mattresses, and sacks stuffed with straw, in the apartments which were now converted into dormitories. He also gave orders that large stores of provisions should be brought in for the maintenance of the guests whom God should send him, and who thronged in in daily increasing numbers. He, in the meanwhile, was never stationary; in and out of the castle, up and down the ascent, round about through the valley, to establish, to fortify, to visit the different posts, to see and to be seen, to put and to keep all in order by his directions, oversight, and presence. In doors, and by the way, he gave hearty welcomes to all the new comers whom he happened to meet; and all, who had either seen this wonderful person before, or now beheld him for the first time, gazed at him in rapture, forgetting for a moment the misfortunes and alarm which had driven them thither, and turning to look at him, when, having severed himself from them, he again pursued his way.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

**T**HOUGH the greatest concourse was not from the quarter by which our three fugitives approached the valley, but rather at the opposite entrance; yet, in this second half of their journey, they began to meet with fellow-travellers, companions in misfortune, who, from cross-roads or by-paths, had issued, or were issuing, into the main road. In circumstances like these all who happen to meet each other are acquaintances. Every time that the cart overtook a pedestrian traveller, there was an exchanging of questions and replies. Some had made their escape, like our friends, without awaiting the arrival of the soldiers; some had heard the clanging of arms and kettledrums; while others had actually beheld them, and painted them as the terror-stricken usually paint the objects of their terror.



"We are fortunate, however," said the two women: "let us thank Heaven for it. Our goods must go; but, at least, we are out of the way."

But Don Abbondio could not find so much to rejoice at; even this concourse, and still more the far greater one which he heard was pouring in from the opposite direction, began to throw a gloom over his mind. "Oh, what a state of things!" muttered he to the women, at a moment when there was nobody at hand: "oh, what a state of things! Don't you see, that to collect so many people into one place is just the same thing as to draw all the soldiers here by force? Everybody is hiding, everybody carries off his things! nothing's left in the houses: so they'll think there must be some treasures up here. They'll surely come! Oh poor me! What have I embarked in?"

"What should they have to come here for?" said Perpetua: "they are obliged to go straight on their way. And besides, I've always heard say, that it's better to be a large party when there's any danger."

"A large party? a large party?" replied Don Abbondio. "Foolish woman! Don't you know that a single German soldier could devour a hundred of such as they? And then, if they should take it into their heads to play any pranks, it would be a fine thing, wouldn't it, to find ourselves in the midst of a battle? Oh poor me! It would have been less dangerous to have gone to the mountains. Why should everybody choose to go to one place? . . . Tiresome folks!" muttered he in a still lower voice. "All here: still coming, coming, coming; one after the other, like sheep that have no sense."

"In this way," said Agnese, "they might say the same of us."

"Hush, hush!" said Don Abbondio, "all this talk does no good. What's done is done: we are here, and



now we must stay here. It will be as Providence wills: Heaven send it may be good!"

But his horror was greatly increased when, at the entrance of the valley, he saw a large body of armed men, some at the door of a house, and others quartered in the lower rooms. He cast a side glance at them: they were not the same faces which it had been his lot to see on his former melancholy entrance, or if there were any of the same, they were strangely altered; but, with all this, it is impossible to say what uneasiness this sight gave him.—Oh poor me!—thought he.—See, now, if they won't play pranks! It isn't likely it could be otherwise; I ought to have expected it from a man of this kind. But what will he want to do? Will he make war? will he play the king, eh? Oh poor me! In circumstances when one would wish to bury one's-self underground, and this man seeks every way of making himself known, and attracting attention; it seems as if he wished to invite them!—

"You see now, Signor master," said Perpetua, addressing him, "there are brave people here who will know how to defend us. Let the soldiers come now: these people are not like our clowns, who are good for nothing but to drag their legs after them."

"Hold your tongue," said Don Abbondio, in a low and angry tone, "hold your tongue; you don't know what you are talking about. Pray Heaven that the soldiers may make haste, or that they may never come to know what is doing here, and that the place is being fortified like a fortress. Don't you know it's the soldiers' business to take fortresses? They wish nothing better; to take a place by storm is to them like going to a wedding; because all they find they take to themselves, and the inhabitants they put to the edge of the sword. Oh poor me! Well, I'll surely see if there's no way of putting oneself in safety on some of these



peaks. They won't reach me there in a battle! oh, they won't reach me there!"

"If you're afraid, too, of being defended and helped . . . ." Perpetua was again beginning; but Don Abbondio sharply interrupted her, though still in a suppressed tone: "Hold your tongue; and take good care you don't report what we've said: woe unto us if you do! Remember that we must always put on a pleasant countenance here, and approve all we see."

At Malanotte they found another watch of armed men, to whom Don Abbondio submissively took off his hat, saying, in the meanwhile, in his heart—Alas! alas! I've certainly come to an encampment!—Here the cart stopped; they dismounted; Don Abbondio hastily paid and dismissed the driver; and with his two companions silently mounted the steep. The sight of these places recalled to his imagination, and mingled with his present troubles the remembrance of those which he had suffered here once before. And Agnese, who had never seen these scenes, and who had drawn to herself an imaginary picture, which presented itself to her mind whenever she thought of the circumstances that had occurred here, on seeing them now as they were in reality, experienced a new and more vivid feeling of these mournful recollections. "Oh, Signor Curate!" exclaimed she, "to think that my poor Lucia has passed along this road! . . . ."

"Will you hold your tongue, you absurd woman?" cried Don Abbondio in her ear. "Are those things to be bringing up here? Don't you know we are in his place? It was well for us nobody heard you then; but if you talk in this way . . . ."

"Oh!" said Agnese; "now that he's a saint! . . . ."

"Well, be quiet!" replied Don Abbondio again in her ear. "Do you think one may say without caution, even to saints, all that passes through one's mind?"



Think rather of thanking him for his goodness to you."

"Oh, I've already thought of that: do you think I don't know even a little civility?"

"Civility is, not to say things that may be disagreeable to a person, particularly to one who is not accustomed to hear them. And understand well, both of you, that this is not a place to go chattering about, and saying whatever may happen to come into your heads. It is a great Signor's house, you know that already: see what a household there is all around: people of all sorts come here; so be prudent, if you can: weigh your words; and, above all, let there be few of them, and only when there is a necessity: one can't get wrong when one is silent."

"You do far worse, with all your . . . ." Perpetua began: but, "Hush!" cried Don Abbondio, in a suppressed voice, at the same time hastily taking off his hat, and making a profound bow: for, on looking up, he had discovered the Unnamed coming down to meet them. He, on his part, had noticed and recognised Don Abbondio, and was now hastening to welcome him.

"Signor Curate," said he, when he had reached him, "I should have liked to offer you my house on a pleasanter occasion; but, under any circumstances, I am exceedingly glad to be able to be of some service to you."

"Trusting in your illustrious Lordship's great kindness," replied Don Abbondio, "I have ventured to come, under these melancholy circumstances, to intrude upon you: and, as your illustrious Lordship sees, I have also presumed to bring company with me. This is my housekeeper . . . ."

"She is welcome," said the Unnamed.

"And this," continued Don Abbondio, "is a woman to whom your Lordship has already been very good: the mother of that . . . . of that . . . ."



"Of Lucia," said Agnese.

"Of Lucia!" exclaimed the Unnamed, turning with a look of shame towards Agnese. "Been very good, I! Immortal God! You are very good to me, to come here . . . to me . . . to this house. You are most heartily welcome. You bring a blessing along with you."

"Oh, sir," said Agnese, "I come to give you trouble. I have, too," continued she, going very close to his ear, "to thank you . . ."

The Unnamed interrupted these words, by anxiously making inquiries about Lucia: and having heard the intelligence they had to give, he turned to accompany his new guests to the castle, and persisted in doing so, in spite of their ceremonious opposition. Agnese cast a glance at the Curate, which meant to say,—You see, now, whether there's any need for you to interpose between us with your advice!—

"Have they reached your parish?" asked the Unnamed, addressing Don Abbondio.

"No, Signor; for I would not willingly await the arrival of these devils," replied he. "Heaven knows if I should have been able to escape alive out of their hands, and come to trouble your illustrious Lordship."

"Well, well, you may take courage," resumed the nobleman, "for you are now safe enough. They'll not come up here; and if they should wish to make the trial, we're ready to receive them."

"We'll hope they won't come," said Don Abbondio. "I hear," added he, pointing with his finger towards the mountains which enclosed the valley on the opposite side, "I hear that another band of soldiers is wandering about in that quarter too, but . . . but . . ."

"True," replied the Unnamed; "but you need have no fear: we are ready for them also."—Between two fires,—in the meanwhile said Don Abbondio to himself:



—exactly between two fires. Where have I suffered myself to be drawn? and by two silly women! And this man seems actually in his element in it all! Oh, what people there are in the world!—

On entering the castle, the Signor had Agnese and Perpetua conducted to an apartment in the quarter assigned to the women, which occupied three of the four sides of the inner court, in the back part of the building, and was situated on a jutting and isolated rock, overhanging a precipice. The men were lodged in the sides of the other court to the right and left, and in that which looked on the esplanade. The central block, which separated the two quadrangles, and afforded a passage from one to the other through a wide archway opposite the principal gate, was partly occupied with provisions, and partly served as a depository for any little property the refugees might wish to secure in this retreat. In the quarters appropriated to the men, was a small apartment destined for the use of any clergy who might happen to take refuge there. Hither the Unnamed himself conducted Don Abbondio, who was the first to take possession of it.

Three or four-and-twenty days our fugitives remained at the castle, in a state of continual bustle, forming a large company, which at first received constant additions, but without any incidents of importance. Perhaps, however, not a single day passed without their resorting to arms. Lansquenets were coming in this direction; *cappelletti* had been seen in that. Every time this intelligence was brought, the Unnamed sent men to reconnoitre; and, if there were any necessity, took with him some whom he kept in readiness for the purpose, and accompanied them beyond the valley, in the direction of the indicated danger. And it was a singular thing to behold a band of brigands, armed *cap-à-pié*, and conducted like soldiers by one who was himself unarmed. Generally



it proved to be only foragers and disbanded pillagers, who contrived to make off before they were taken by surprise. But once, when driving away some of these, to teach them not to come again into that neighbourhood, the Unnamed received intelligence that an adjoining village was invaded and given up to plunder. They were soldiers of various corps, who, having loitered behind to hunt for booty, had formed themselves into a band, and made a sudden irruption into the lands surrounding that where the army had taken up its quarters; despoiling the inhabitants, and even levying contributions from them. The Unnamed made a brief harangue to his followers, and bid them march forward to the invaded village.

They arrived unexpectedly: the plunderers, who had thought of nothing but taking the spoil, abandoned their prey in the midst, on seeing men in arms, and ready for battle, coming down upon them, and hastily took to flight, without waiting for one another, in the direction whence they had come. He pursued them for a little distance; then, making a halt, waited awhile to see if any fresh object presented itself, and at length returned homewards. It is impossible to describe the shouts of applause and benediction which accompanied the troop of deliverers and its leader, on passing through the rescued village.

Among the multitude of refugees assembled in the castle, strangers to each other, and differing in rank, habits, sex, and age, no disturbance of any moment occurred. The Unnamed had placed guards in various posts, all of whom endeavoured to ward off any unpleasantness with the care usually exhibited by those who are held accountable for any misdemeanours.

He had also requested the clergy, and others of most authority among those to whom he afforded shelter, to walk round the place, and keep a watch; and, as often



as he could, he himself went about to show himself in every direction, while, even in his absence, the remembrance of who was in the house served as a restraint to those who needed it. Besides, they were all people that had fled from danger, and hence generally inclined to peace: while the thoughts of their homes and property, and in some cases, of relatives and friends whom they had left exposed to danger, and the tidings they heard from without, depressed their spirits, and thus maintained and constantly increased this disposition.

There were, however, some unburdened spirits, some men of firmer mould and stronger courage, who tried to pass these days merrily. They had abandoned their homes because they were not strong enough to defend them; but they saw no use in weeping and sighing over things that could not be helped, or in picturing to themselves, and contemplating beforehand, in imagination, the havoc they would only too soon witness with their own eyes. Families acquainted with each other had left their homes at the same time, and had met with each other again in this retreat; new friendships were formed; and the multitude were divided into parties, according to their several habits and dispositions. They who had money and consideration went to dine down in the valley, where eating-houses and inns had been hastily run up for the occasion: in some, mouthfuls were interchanged with lamentations, or no subject but their misfortunes was allowed to be discussed; in others, misfortunes were never remembered, unless it were to say that they must not think about them. To those who either could not, or would not, bear part of the expenses, bread, soup, and wine were distributed in the castle; besides other tables which were laid out daily for those whom the Signor had expressly invited to partake of them; and our acquaintances were among this number.



Agnese and Perpetua, not to eat the bread of idleness, had begged to be employed in the services which, in so large an establishment, must have been required; and in these occupations they spent a great part of the day, while the rest was passed in chatting with some friends, whose acquaintance they had made, or with the unfortunate Don Abbondio. This individual, though he had nothing to do, was, nevertheless, never afflicted with ennui: his fears kept him company. The direct dread of an assault had, I believe, subsided: or, if it still remained, it was one which gave him the least uneasiness; because, whenever he bestowed upon it the slightest thought, he could not help seeing how unfounded it was. But the idea of the surrounding country, inundated on both sides with brutal soldiers, the armour and armed men he had constantly before his eyes, the remembrance that he was in a castle, together with the thought of the many things that might happen any moment in such a situation, all contributed to keep him in indistinct, general, constant alarm; let alone the anxiety he felt when he thought of his poor home. During the whole time he remained in this asylum, he never once went more than a stone's throw from the building, nor ever set foot on the descent: his sole walk was to go out upon the esplanade, and pace up and down, sometimes to one, sometimes to the other side of the castle, there to look down among the cliffs and precipices, in hopes of discovering some practicable passage, some kind of footpath, by which he might go in search of a hiding-place, in case of being very closely pressed. On meeting any of his companions in this asylum, he failed not to make a profound bow, or respectful salutation, but he associated with very few; his most frequent conversations were with the two women, as we have related; and to them he poured out all his griefs, at the risk of being sometimes silenced by Perpetua, and completely



put to shame even by Agnese. At table, however, where he sat but little, and talked still less, he heard the news of the terrible march which arrived daily at the castle, either reported from village to village, and from mouth to mouth, or brought thither by some one who had at first determined to remain at home, and had, after all, made his escape, without having been able to save anything, and probably, also, after receiving considerable ill-treatment; and every day brought with it some fresh tale of misfortune. Some, who were newsmongers by profession, diligently collected the different rumours, weighed all the various accounts, and then gave the substance of them to the others. They disputed which were the most destructive regiments, and whether infantry or cavalry were the worst; they reported, as well as they could, the names of some of the leaders; related some of their past enterprises, specified the places of halting, and the daily marches. That day such a regiment would spread over such a district; to-morrow, it would ravage such another, where, in the meanwhile, another had been playing the very devil, and worse. They chiefly, however, sought information, and kept count of the regiments which from time to time crossed the bridge of Lecco, because these might be considered as fairly gone, and really out of the territory. The cavalry of Wallenstein passed it, and the infantry of Maradas; the cavalry of Anzalt, and the infantry under Brandeburgo; the troops of Montecuccoli, then those of Ferrari; then followed Altringer, then Furstenburg, then Colloredo; after them came the Croats, Torquato Conti, and this, that, and the other leader; and last of all, in Heaven's good time, came at length Galasso. The flying squadron of Venetians made their final exit; and the whole country, on either hand, was once more set at liberty. Those belonging to the invaded villages which were first cleared of their ravagers, had already



begun to evacuate the castle, and every day people continued to leave the place: as after an autumnal storm, the birds may be seen issuing on every side from the leafy branches of a great tree, where they had sought a shelter from its fury. Our three refugees were, perhaps, the last to take their departure, owing to Don Abbondio's extreme reluctance to run the risk, if they returned home immediately, of meeting some straggling soldiers who might still be loitering in the rear of the army. It was in vain Perpetua repeated and insisted, that the longer they delayed, the greater opportunities they afforded to the thieves of the neighbourhood to enter the house and finish the business: whenever the safety of life was at stake, Don Abbondio invariably gained the day; unless, indeed, the imminence of the danger were such as to deprive him of the power of self-defence.

On the day fixed for their departure, the Unnamed had a carriage in readiness at Malanotte, in which he had already placed a full supply of clothes for Agnese. Drawing her a little aside, he also forced her to accept a small store of *scudi*, to compensate for the damages she would find at home; although, striking her breast, she kept repeating that she had still some of the first supply left.

"When you see your poor good Lucia . . ." said he, the last thing: "I am already convinced she prays for me, because I have done her so much wrong; tell her, then, that I thank her, and trust in God her prayers will return, also, in equal blessings upon her own head."

He then insisted upon accompanying his three guests to the carriage. The obsequious and extravagant acknowledgments of Don Abbondio, and the complimentary speeches of Perpetua, we leave to the reader's imagination. They set off, made a short stay, according to agreement, at the tailor's cottage, and there heard a hundred particulars of the march, the usual tale of theft,



violence, destruction, and obscenity ; but there, fortunately, none of the soldiery had been seen.

" Ah, Signor Curate !" said the tailor, as he offered him his arm to assist him again into the carriage, " they'll have matter enough for a printed book in a scene of destruction like this."

As they advanced a little on their journey, our travellers began to witness, with their own eyes, something of what they had heard described ; vineyards despoiled, not as by the vintager, but as though a storm of wind and hail combined had exerted their utmost energies ; branches strewn upon the earth, broken off, and trampled under foot ; stakes torn up, the ground trodden and covered with chips, leaves, and twigs ; trees uprooted, or their branches lopped ; hedges broken down ; stiles carried away. In the villages, too, doors shivered to pieces, windows destroyed, straw, rags, rubbish of all kinds, lying in heaps, or scattered all over the pavement ; a close atmosphere, and horrid odours of a more revolting nature proceeding from the houses ; some of the villagers busy in sweeping out the accumulation of filth within them ; others in repairing the doors and windows as they best could ; some again weeping in groups, and indulging in lamentations together ; and as the carriage drove through, hands stretched out on both sides at the doors of the vehicle imploring alms.

With these scenes, now before their eyes, now pictured in their minds, and with the expectation of finding their own houses in just the same state, they at length arrived there, and found that their expectations were indeed realised.

Agnese deposited her bundles in one corner of her little yard, the cleanest spot that remained about the house ; she then set herself to sweep it thoroughly, and collect and re-arrange the little furniture which had been left her ; she got a carpenter and blacksmith to come



and mend the doors and window-frames ; and then, unpacking the linen which had been given her, and secretly counting over her fresh store of coins, she exclaimed to herself,—I've fallen upon my feet! God, and the Madonna, and that good Signor, be thanked! I may indeed say, I've fallen upon my feet!—

Don Abbondio and Perpetua entered the house without the aid of keys, and at every step they took in the passage encountered a fetid odour, a poisonous effluvia, which almost drove them back. Holding their noses, they advanced to the kitchen-door; entered on tip-toe, carefully picking their way to avoid the most disgusting parts of the filthy straw which covered the ground, and cast a glance around. Nothing was left whole; but relics and fragments of what once had been, both here and in other parts of the house, were to be seen in every corner: quills and feathers from Perpetua's fowls, scraps of linen, leaves out of Don Abbondio's calendars, remnants of kitchen utensils; all heaped together, or scattered in confusion upon the floor. On the hearth might be discovered tokens of a riotous scene of destruction, like a multitude of ordinary ideas scattered through a widely-diffused period by a professed orator. There were the vestiges of extinguished faggots and billets of wood, which showed them to have been once the arm of a chair, a table-foot, the door of a cupboard, a bed-post, or a stave of the little cask which contained the wine, so beneficial to Don Abbondio's stomach. The rest was cinders and coals; and with some of these very coals, the spoilers, by way of recreation, had scrawled on the walls distorted figures, doing their best, by the help of sundry square caps, shaven crowns, and large bands, to represent priests, studiously exhibited in all manner of horrible and ludicrous attitudes: an intention, certainly, in which such artists could not possibly have failed.



"Ah, the dirty pigs!" exclaimed Perpetua. "Ah, the thieves!" cried Don Abbondio; and, as if making their escape, they went out by another door, that led into the garden. Once more drawing their breath, they went straight up to the fig-tree; but, even before reaching it, they discovered that the ground had been disturbed, and both together uttered an exclamation of dismay; and, on coming up, they found in truth, instead



of the dead, only the empty tomb. This gave rise to some disputes: Don Abbondio began to scold Perpetua for having hidden it so badly: it may be imagined whether she would fail to retort: and after indulging in mutual recrimination till they were tired, they returned, with many a lingering look cast back at the empty hole, grumbling into the house. They found things nearly in the same state everywhere. Long and diligently they worked to cleanse and purify the house, the more so as it was then extremely difficult to get any help; and they remained, for I know not what length of time, as if in encampment, arranging things as they best could—and bad was the best—and gradually restoring doors, furniture, and utensils, with money lent to them by Agnese.



In addition to these grievances, this disaster was, for some time afterwards, the source of many other very ticklish disputes; for Perpetua, by dint of asking, peeping, and hunting out, had come to know for certain that some of her master's household goods, which were thought to have been carried off or destroyed by the soldiers, were, instead, safe and sound with some people in the neighbourhood; and she was continually tormenting her master to make a stir about them, and claim his own. A chord more odious to Don Abbondio could not have been touched, considering that his property was in the hands of ruffians, of that species of persons, that is to say, with whom he had it most at heart to remain at peace.

"But if I don't want to know about these things . . . ." said he. "How often am I to tell you that what is gone, is gone? Am I to be harassed in this way, too, because my house has been robbed?"

"I tell you," replied Perpetua, "that you would let the very eyes be eaten out of your head. To rob others is a sin, but with you, it is a sin *not* to rob you."

"Very proper language for you, certainly!" answered Don Abbondio. "Will you hold your tongue?"

Perpetua did hold her tongue, but not so directly; and even then every thing was a pretext for beginning again; so that the poor man was at last reduced to the necessity of suppressing every lamentation on the lack of this or that article of furniture, at the moment he most wanted to give vent to his regrets; for more than once he had been doomed to hear: "Go seek it at such a one's, who has it, and who wouldn't have kept it till now, if he hadn't had to deal with such an easy man."

Another and more vivid cause of disquietude, was the intelligence that soldiers continued daily to be passing in confusion, as he had too well conjectured; hence he was ever in apprehension of seeing a man, or even a




band of men, arriving at his door, which he had had repaired in haste the first thing, and which he kept barred with the greatest precaution; but, thank Heaven! this catastrophe never occurred. These terrors, however, were not appeased, when a new one was added to their number.

But here we must leave the poor man on one side: for other matters are now to be treated of than his private apprehensions, the misfortunes of a few villages, or a transient disaster.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

HE plague, which the Board of Health had feared might enter with the German troops into the Milanese, had entered it indeed, as is well known; and it is likewise well known, that it paused not here, but invaded and ravaged a great part of Italy. Following the thread of our story, we now come to relate the principal incidents of this calamity in the Milanese, or rather in Milan almost exclusively: for almost exclusively of the city do the records of the times treat, nearly as it always and everywhere happens, for good reasons or bad. And, to say the truth, it is not only our object, in this narrative, to represent the state of things in which our characters will shortly be placed; but at the same time to develop, as far as may be in so limited a space, and from our pen, an event in the history of our country more celebrated than well known.

Of the many contemporary accounts, there is not one which is sufficient by itself to convey a distinct and connected idea of it; as there is not, perhaps, one which may not give us some assistance in forming that idea. In every one, not excepting that of Ripamonti,\* which considerably exceeds all the rest, both in copiousness and in its selection of facts, and still more in its method

\* *Josephi Ripamontii, canonici scalensis, chronistæ urbis Mediolani, de Peste quæ fuit anno 1630, Lib. V. Mediolani, 1640. Apud Malatestas.*



of viewing them, essential facts are omitted which are recorded in others; in every one there are errors of material importance, which may be detected and rectified with the help of some other, or of the few printed or manuscript acts of public authority which still remain; and we may often discover in one, those causes, the effects of which were found partially developed in another. In all, too, a strange confusion of times and things prevailed, and a perpetual wandering backward and forward, as it were at random, without design, special or general: the character, by the bye, of books of all classes in those days, chiefly among such as were written in the vulgar tongue, at least in Italy; whether, also, in the rest of Europe, the learned will know, and we shrewdly suspect it so to have been. No writer of later date has attempted to examine and compare these memoirs, with the view of extracting thence a connected series of events, a history of this plague; so that the idea generally formed of it must necessarily be very uncertain and somewhat confused, a vague idea of great evils and great errors, (and assuredly there were both one and the other beyond what can possibly be imagined),—an idea composed more of opinions than of facts, mingled, indeed, with a few scattered events, but unconnected, sometimes, with their most characteristic circumstances, and without distinction of time, that is to say, without perception of cause and effect, of course and progress. We, having examined and compared, with at least much diligence, all the printed accounts, more than one unpublished one, and (in comparison of the few that remain on the subject) many official documents, have endeavoured to do, not, perhaps, all that is needed, but something which has not hitherto been done. We do not purpose relating every public act, nor all the results worthy, in some degree, of remembrance. Still less do we pretend to render needless to such as would gain a



more complete acquaintance with the subject, the perusal of the original writings: we are too well aware what lively, peculiar, and, so to say, incommunicable force invariably belongs to works of that kind, in whatever manner designed and executed. We have merely endeavoured to distinguish and ascertain the most general and important facts, to arrange them in their real order of succession, so far as the matter and the nature of them will allow, to observe their reciprocal effect, and thus to give, for the present, and until some one else shall do better, a succinct, but plain and continuous account of this calamity.

Throughout the whole track, then, of the territory traversed by the army, corpses might be found either in the houses, or lying upon the highway. Very shortly, single individuals, or whole families, began to sicken and die of violent and strange complaints, with symptoms unknown to the greater part of those who were then alive. There were only a few who had ever seen them before: the few, that is, who could remember the plague which, fifty-three years previously, had desolated a great part of Italy indeed, but especially the Milanese, where it was then, and is still, called the plague of San Carlo. So powerful is Charity! Among the various and awful recollections of a general calamity, she could cause that of one individual to predominate; because she had inspired him with feelings and actions more memorable even than the evils themselves; she could set him up in men's minds as a symbol of all these events, because in all she had urged him onward, and held him up to view as guide, and helper, example, and voluntary victim; and could frame for him, as it were, an emblematical device out of a public calamity, and name it after him as though it had been a conquest or discovery.

The oldest physician of his time, Lodovico Settala,



who had not only seen that plague, but had been one of its most active and intrepid, and, though then very young, most celebrated successful opponents; and who now, in strong suspicion of this, was on the alert, and busily collecting information, reported, on the 20th of October, in the Council of the Board of Health, that the contagion had undoubtedly broken out in the village of Chiuso, the last in the territory of Lecco, and on the confines of the Bergamascan district. No resolution, however, was taken on this intelligence, as appears from the "Narrative" of Tadino.\*

Similar tidings arrived from Lecco and Bellano. The Board then decided upon, and contented themselves with, despatching a commissioner, who should take a physician from Como by the way, and accompany him on a visit to the places which had been signified. "Both of them, either from ignorance or some other reason, suffered themselves to be persuaded by an old ignorant barber of Bellano that this sort of disease was not the pestilence;"† but in some places the ordinary effect of the autumnal exhalations from the marshes, and elsewhere, of the privations and sufferings undergone during the passage of the German troops. This affirmation was reported to the Board, who seem to have been perfectly satisfied with it.

But additional reports of the mortality in every quarter pouring in without intermission, two deputies were despatched to see and provide against it—the above-named Tadino, and an auditor of the Committee. When these arrived, the evil had spread so widely, that proofs offered themselves to their view without being sought for. They passed through the territory of Lecco, the Valsassina, the shores of the Lake of Como, and the districts denominated Il Monte di Brianza and La Gera d'Adda; and everywhere found the towns barricaded,

\* Tadino, p. 24.

† Ibid.



others almost deserted, and the inhabitants escaped and encamped in the fields, or scattered throughout the country; "who seemed," says Tadino, "like so many wild savages, carrying in their hands, one a sprig of mint, another of rue, another of rosemary, another, a bottle of vinegar."\* They made inquiries as to the number of deaths, which was really fearful; they visited the sick and dead, and everywhere recognised the dark and terrible marks of the pestilence. They then speedily conveyed the disastrous intelligence by letter to the Board of Health, who, on receiving it, on the 30th of October, "prepared," says Tadino, "to issue warrants to shut out of the city any persons coming from the countries where the plague had shown itself; and while preparing the decree,"† they gave some summary orders beforehand to the custom-house officers.

In the meanwhile, the commissioners, in great haste and precipitation, made what provisions they knew, or could think of, for the best, and returned with the melancholy consciousness of their insufficiency to remedy or arrest an evil already so far advanced, and so widely disseminated.

On the 14th of November, having made their report, both by word of mouth and afresh in writing, to the Board, they received from this committee a commission to present themselves to the governor, and to lay before him the state of things. They went accordingly, and brought back word, that he was exceedingly sorry to hear such news, and had shown a great deal of feeling about it; but the thoughts of war were more pressing: "*Sed belli graviores esse curas.*" So says Ripamonti,‡ after having ransacked the records of the Board of Health, and compared them with Tadino, who had been specially charged with this mission: it was the second, if the reader remembers, for this purpose, and with this

\* Tadino, p. 26.

† Ib. p. 27.

‡ Ripamonti, p. 245.



result. Two or three days afterwards, the 18th of November, the governor issued a proclamation, in which he prescribed public rejoicings for the birth of the Prince Charles, the first-born son of the king, Philip IV., without thinking of, or without caring for, the danger of suffering a large concourse of people under such circumstances: everything as in common times, just as if he had never been spoken to about anything.

This person was, as we have elsewhere said, the celebrated Ambrogio Spinola, sent for the very purpose of adjusting this war, to repair the errors of Don Gonzalo, and, incidentally, to govern; and we may here incidentally mention, that he died a few months later in that very war which he had so much at heart; not wounded in the field of battle, but on his bed, of grief and anxiety occasioned by reproaches, affronts, and ill-treatment of every kind, received from those whom he had served. History has bewailed his fate, and remarked upon the ingratitude of others; it has described with much diligence his military and political enterprises, and extolled his foresight, activity, and perseverance; it might also have inquired what he did with all these, when pestilence threatened and actually invaded a population committed to his care, or rather entirely given up to his authority.

But that which, leaving censure, diminishes our wonder at his behaviour, which even creates another and greater feeling of wonder, is the behaviour of the people themselves; of those, I mean, who, unreached as yet by the contagion, had so much reason to fear it. On the arrival of the intelligence from the territories which were so grievously infected with it, territories which formed almost a semi-circular line round the city, in some places not more than twenty, or even eighteen, miles distant from it, who would not have thought that a general stir would have been created, that they would



have been diligent in taking precautions, whether well or ill selected, or at least have felt a barren disquietude? Nevertheless, if in anything the records of the times agree, it is in attesting that there were none of these. The scarcity of the antecedent year, the violence of the soldiery, and their sufferings of mind, seemed to them more than enough to account for the mortality: and if any one had attempted, in the streets, shops, and houses, to throw out a hint of danger, and mention the plague, it would have been received with incredulous scoffs, or angry contempt. The same incredulity, or, to speak more correctly, the same blindness and perversity, prevailed in the senate, in the Council of the *Decurioni*, and in all the magistrates.

I find that Cardinal Federigo, immediately on learning the first cases of a contagious sickness, enjoined his priests, in a pastoral letter, among other things, to impress upon the people the importance and obligation of making known every similar case, and delivering up any infected or suspected goods:\* and this, too, may be reckoned among his praiseworthy peculiarities.

The Board of Health solicited precautions and co-operation: it was all but in vain. And in the Board itself their solicitude was far from equalling the urgency of the case: it was the two physicians, as Tadino frequently affirms, and as appears still better from the whole context of his narrative, who, persuaded and deeply sensible of the gravity and imminence of the danger, urged forward that body, which was then to urge forward others.

We have already seen how, on the first tidings of the plague, there had been indifference and remissness in acting, and even in obtaining information: we now give another instance of dilatoriness not less portentous,

\* Life of Federigo Borromeo, compiled by Francesco Rivola. Milan: 1866. P. 584.



if indeed it were not compelled by obstacles interposed by the superior magistrates. That proclamation in the form of warrants, resolved upon on the 30th of October, was not completed till the 23d of the following month, nor published till the 29th. The plague had already entered Milan.

Tadino and Ripamonti would record the name of the individual who first brought it thither, together with other circumstances of the person and the fact: and, in truth, in observing the beginnings of a wide-spreading destruction, in which the victims not only cannot be distinguished by name, but their numbers can scarcely be expressed with any degree of exactness, even by the thousand, one feels a certain kind of interest in ascertaining those first and few names which could be noted and preserved: it seems as if this sort of distinction, a precedence in extermination, invests them, and all the other minutiae, which would otherwise be most indifferent, with something fatal and memorable.

Both one and the other historian say that it was an Italian soldier in the Spanish service; but in nothing else do they agree, not even in the name. According to Tadino, it was a person of the name of Pietro Antonio Lovato, quartered in the territory of Lecco: according to Ripamonti, a certain Pier Paolo Locati, quartered at Chiavenna. They differ also as to the day of his entrance into Milan; the first placing it on the 22d of October, the second, on the same day in the following month: yet it cannot be on either one or the other. Both the dates contradict others which are far better authenticated. Yet Ripamonti, writing by order of the General Council of the *Decurioni*, ought to have had many means at his command of gaining the necessary information; and Tadino, in consideration of his office, might have been better informed than any one else on a subject of this nature. In short, comparing other dates,



which, as we have said, appear to us more authentic, it would seem that it was prior to the publication of the warrants; and if it were worth while, it might even be proved, or nearly so, that it must have been very early in that month: but the reader will, doubtless, excuse us the task.

However it may be, this soldier, unfortunate himself, and the bearer of misfortune to others, entered the city with a large bundle of clothes purchased or stolen from the German troops; he went to stay at the house of one of his relatives in the suburbs of the Porta Orientale, near to the Capuchin Convent. Scarcely had he arrived there, when he was taken ill; he was conveyed to the hospital; here, a spot, discovered under one of the armpits, excited some suspicion in the mind of the person who tended him, of what was in truth the fact; and on the fourth day he died.

The Board of Health immediately ordered his family to be kept separate, and confined within their own house; and his clothes, and the bed on which he had laid at the hospital, were burned. Two attendants, who had there nursed him, and a good friar, who had rendered him his assistance, were all three, within a few days, seized with the plague. The suspicions which had here been felt, from the beginning, of the nature of the disease, and the precautions taken in consequence, prevented the further spread of the contagion from this source.

But the soldier had left seed outside, which delayed not to spring up, and shoot forth. The first person in whom it broke out was the master of the house where he had lodged, one Carlo Colonna, a lute-player. All the inmates of the dwelling were then, by order of the Board, conveyed to the Lazzeretto; where the greater number took to their beds, and many shortly died, of evident infection.



In the city, that which had been already disseminated there by intercourse with the above-mentioned family, and by clothes and furniture belonging to them preserved by relations, lodgers, or servants, from the searches and flames prescribed by the Board, as well as that which was afresh introduced by defectiveness in the regulations, by negligence in executing them, and by dexterity in eluding them, continued lurking about, and slowly insinuating itself among the inhabitants, all the rest of the year, and in the earlier months of 1630, the year which followed. From time to time, now in this, now in that quarter, some one was seized with the contagion, some one was carried off with it: and the very infrequency of the cases contributed to lull all suspicions of pestilence, and confirmed the generality more and more in the senseless and murderous assurance that plague it was not, and never had been, for a moment. Many physicians, too, echoing the voice of the people, (was it, in this instance also, the voice of Heaven?) derided the ominous predictions and threatening warnings of the few; and always had at hand the names of common diseases to qualify every case of pestilence which they were summoned to cure, with what symptom or token soever it evinced itself.

The reports of these instances, when they reached the Board of Health at all, reached it, for the most part, tardily and uncertainly. Dread of sequestration and the Lazzeretto sharpened every one's wits; they concealed the sick, they corrupted the grave-diggers and elders, and obtained false certificates, by means of bribes, from subalterns of the Board itself, deputed by it to visit and inspect the dead bodies.

As, however, on every discovery they succeeded in making, the Board ordered the wearing apparel to be committed to the flames, put the houses under sequestration, and sent the inmates to the Lazzeretto, it is easy



to imagine what must have been the anger and dissatisfaction of the generality "of the nobility, merchants, and lower orders,"\* persuaded, as they all were, that they were mere causeless vexations without any advantage. The principal odium fell upon the two doctors, our frequently-mentioned Tadino and Senatore Settala, son of the senior physician, and reached such a height, that thenceforward they could not publicly appear without being assailed with opprobrious language, if not with stones. And, certainly, the situation in which these individuals were placed for several months, is remarkable, and worthy of being recorded, seeing a horrible scourge advancing towards them, labouring, by every method, to repulse it, yet meeting with obstacles, not only in the arduousness of the task, but, from every quarter, in the unwillingness of the people, and being made the general object of execration, and regarded as the enemies of their country: "*Pro patriæ hostibus*," says Ripamonti.\*

Sharers, also, in this hatred were the other physicians, who, convinced like them of the reality of the contagion, suggested precautions, and sought to communicate to others their melancholy convictions. The most knowing taxed them with credulity and obstinacy; while, with the many, it was evidently an imposture, a planned combination, to make a profit by the public fears.

The aged physician, Lodovico Settala, who had almost attained his eightieth year, who had been Professor of Medicine in the University of Pavia, and afterwards of Moral Philosophy at Milan, the author of many works at that time in very high repute, eminent for the invitations he had received to occupy the chairs of other universities, Ingolstadt, Pisa, Bologna, and Padua, and for his refusal of all these honours, was certainly one of

\* Tadino, p. 73.

† Ripamonti, p. 261.



the most influential men of his time. To his reputation for learning was added that of his life; and to admiration of his character, a feeling of good-will for his great kindness in curing and benefiting the poor. Yet there is one circumstance, which, in our minds, disturbs and overclouds the sentiment of esteem inspired by these merits, but which at that time must have rendered it stronger and more general: the poor man participated in the commonest and most fatal prejudices of his contemporaries: he was in advance of them, but not distinguished from the multitude; a station which only invites trouble, and often causes the loss of an authority acquired by other means. Nevertheless, that which he enjoyed in so great a degree, was not only insufficient to overcome the general opinion on this subject of the pestilence, but it could not even protect him from the animosity and the insults of that part of the populace, which most readily steps from opinions to their exhibition by actual deeds.

One day, as he was going in a litter to visit his patients, crowds began to assemble round him, crying out that he was the head of those who were determined, in spite of everything, to make out that there was a plague; that it was he who put the city in alarm, with his gloomy brow, and shaggy beard; and all to give employment to the doctors! The multitude and their fury went on increasing; so that the bearers, seeing their danger, took refuge with their master in the house of a friend, which fortunately happened to be at hand. All this occurred to him for having foreseen clearly, stated what was really the fact, and wished to save thousands of his fellow-creatures from the pestilence: when having, by his deplorable advice, co-operated in causing a poor unhappy wretch to be put to the torture, racked, and burnt as a witch, because one of her masters had suffered extraordinary pains in his stomach, and another,



some time before, had been desperately enamoured of her,\* he had received from the popular voice additional reputation for wisdom, and, what is intolerable to think of, the additional title of the well-deserving.

Towards the latter end of March, however, sicknesses and deaths began rapidly to multiply, first in the suburbs of the Porta Orientale, and then in all the other quarters of the city, with the unusual accompaniments of spasms, palpitation, lethargy, delirium, and those fatal symptoms, livid spots and sores; and these deaths were, for the most part, rapid, violent, and not unfrequently sudden, without any previous tokens of illness. Those physicians who were opposed to the belief of contagion, unwilling now to admit what they had hitherto derided, yet obliged to give a generical name to the new malady, which had become too common and too evident to go without one, adopted that of malignant or pestilential fevers;—a miserable expedient, a mere play upon words, which was productive of much harm; because, while it appeared to acknowledge the truth, it only contributed to the disbelief of what it was most important to believe and discern, viz. that the infection was conveyed by means of the touch. The magistrates, like one awaking from a deep sleep, began to lend a little more ear to the appeals and proposals of the Board of Health, to support its proclamations, and second the sequestrations prescribed, and the quarantines enjoined by this tribunal. The Board was also constantly demanding money to provide for the daily expenses of the Lazzeretto, now augmented by so many additional services; and for this they applied to the *Decurioni*, while it was being decided (which was never done, I believe, except by practice) whether such expenses should be charged to the city, or to the royal exchequer. The high chancellor also applied

\* History of Milan, by Count Pietro Verri. Milan: 1825. Vol. IV. p. 155.



importunately to the *Decurioni*, by order, too, of the governor, who had again returned to lay siege to the unfortunate Casale; the senate likewise applied to them, imploring them to see to the best method of victualling the city, before they should be forbidden, in case of the unhappy dissemination of the contagion, to have any intercourse with other countries; and to find means of maintaining a large proportion of the population which was now deprived of employment. The *Decurioni* endeavoured to raise money by loans and taxes; and of what they thus accumulated they gave a little to the Board of Health, a little to the poor, purchased a little corn, and thus, in some degree, supplied the existing necessity. The severest sufferings had not yet arrived.

In the Lazzeretto, where the population, although decimated daily, continued daily on the increase, there was another arduous undertaking, to insure attendance and subordination, to preserve the enjoined separations, to maintain, in short, or rather to establish, the government prescribed by the Board of Health: for, from the very first, everything had been in confusion, from the ungovernableness of many of the inmates, and the negligence or connivance of the officials. The Board and the *Decurioni*, not knowing which way to turn, bethought themselves of applying to the Capuchins, and besought the Father Commissary, as he was called, of the province, who occupied the place of the Father Provincial, lately deceased, to give them a competent person to govern this desolate kingdom. The commissary proposed to them, as their governor, one Father Felice Casati, a man of advanced age, who enjoyed great reputation for charity, activity, and gentleness of disposition, combined with a strong mind,—a character which, as the sequel will show, was well deserved; and as his coadjutor and assistant, one Father Michele Pozzobonelli, still a young man, but grave and stern in mind as in



countenance. Gladly enough were they accepted; and on the 30th of March they entered the Lazzaretto. The President of the Board of Health conducted them round, as it were, to put them in possession; and having assembled the servants and officials of every rank, proclaimed Father Felice, in their presence, governor of the place, with primary and unlimited authority. In proportion as the wretched multitude there assembled increased, other capuchins resorted thither; and here were superintendents, confessors, administrators, nurses, cooks, overlookers of the wardrobes, washer-women, in short, everything that was required. Father Felice, ever diligent, ever watchful, went about day and night, through the porticoes, chambers, and open spaces, sometimes carrying a spear, sometimes armed only with hair-cloth; he animated and regulated every duty, pacified tumults, settled disputes, threatened, punished, reproved, comforted, dried and shed tears. At the very outset he took the plague; recovered, and with fresh alacrity resumed his first duties. Most of his brethren here sacrificed their lives, and all joyfully.

Such a dictatorship was certainly a strange expedient; strange as was the calamity, strange as were the times; and even did we know no more about it, this alone would suffice as an argument, as a specimen, indeed, of a rude and ill-regulated state of society. But the spirit, the deeds, the self-sacrifice, of these friars, deserve no less than that they should be mentioned with respect and tenderness, and with that species of gratitude which one feels, *en masse* as it were, for great services rendered by men to their fellows. To die in a good cause is a wise and beautiful action, at any time, under any state of things whatsoever. "For had not y<sup>se</sup> Fathers repayed hither," says Tadino, "assuredly y<sup>e</sup> whole Citie would have been annihilated; for it was a miraculous Thing that y<sup>se</sup> Fathers effected so much for y<sup>e</sup> publick



Benefit in so short a space of Time, and, receiving no Assistance, or at least, very little, from y<sup>e</sup> Citie, contrived, by their Industrie and Prudence, to maintain so many thousands of Poore in y<sup>e</sup> Lazzeretto."\*

Among the public also, this obstinacy in denying the pestilence gave way naturally, and gradually disappeared, in proportion as the contagion extended itself, and extended itself, too, before their own eyes, by means of contact and intercourse; and still more when, after having been for some time confined to the lower orders, it began to take effect upon the higher. And among these, as he was then the most eminent, so by us now the senior physician Settala, deserves express mention. People must at least have said: The poor old man was right! But who knows? He, his wife, two sons, and seven persons in his service, all took the plague. One of these sons and himself recovered; the rest died. "These Cases," says Tadino, "occurring in the Citie in the first families, disposed the Nobilitie and common People to think; and the incredulous Physicians, and the ignorant and rash lower Orders, began to bite their Lips, grind their Teeth, and arch their Eyebrows in Amazement."†

But the revolutions, the reprisals, the vengeance, so to say, of convinced obstinacy, are sometimes such as to raise a wish that it had continued unshaken and unconquered, even to the last, against reason and evidence: and this was truly one of these occasions. They who had so resolutely and perseveringly impugned the existence of a germ of evil near them, or among them, which might propagate itself by natural means, and make much havoc, unable now to deny its propagation, and unwilling to attribute it to those means (for this would have been to confess at once a great delusion and a great error), were so much the more inclined to find some other

\* Tadino, p. 98.

† Ib. p. 96.



cause for it, and make good any that might happen to present itself. Unhappily, there was one in readiness in the ideas and traditions common at that time, not only here, but in every part of Europe, of magical arts, diabolical practices, people sworn to disseminate the plague by means of contagious poisons and witchcraft. These and similar things had already been supposed and believed during many other plagues; and at Milan, especially, in that of half a century before. It may be added, that, even during the preceding year, a despatch, signed by King Philip IV., had been forwarded to the governor, in which he was informed that four Frenchmen had escaped from Madrid, who were sought upon suspicion of spreading poisonous and pestilential ointments; and requiring him to be on the watch, perchance they should arrive at Milan. The governor communicated the despatch to the Senate and the Board of Health; and thenceforward, it seems, they thought no more about it. When, however, the plague broke forth, and was recognised by all, the return of this intelligence to memory may have served to confirm and support the vague suspicion of an iniquitous fraud; it may even have been the first occasion of creating it.

But two actions, one of blind and undisciplined fear, the other of I know not what malicious mischief, were what converted this vague suspicion of a possible attempt, into more than suspicion (and, with many, a certain conviction) of a real plot. Some persons, who fancied they had seen people, on the evening of the 17th of May, in the cathedral, anointing a partition which was used to separate the spaces assigned to the two sexes, had this partition, and a number of benches enclosed within it, brought out during the night; although the President of the Board of Health, having repaired thither with four members of the committee, and having inspected the screen, the benches, and the stoups of



holy water, and found nothing that could confirm the ignorant suspicion of a poisonous attempt, had declared, to humour other people's fancies, and *rather to exceed in caution, than from any conviction of necessity*, that it would be sufficient to have the partition washed. This mass of piled-up furniture produced a strong impression of consternation among the multitude, to whom any object so readily became an argument. It was said, and generally believed, that all the benches, walls, and even the bell-ropes in the cathedral, had been rubbed over with unctuous matter. Nor was this affirmed only at the time: all the records of contemporaries (some of them written after a lapse of many years) which allude to this incident, speak of it with equal certainty of asseveration: and we should be obliged to conjecture its true history, did we not find it in a letter from the Board of Health to the governor, preserved in the archives of San Fedele, from which we have extracted it, and whence we have quoted the words we have written in italics.

Next morning a new, stranger, and more significant spectacle, struck the eyes and minds of the citizens. In every part of the city they saw the doors and walls of the houses stained and daubed with long streaks of I know not what filthiness, something yellowish and whitish, spread over them as if with a sponge. Whether it were a base inclination to witness a more clamorous and more general consternation, or a still more wicked design to augment the public confusion, or whatever else it may have been, the fact is attested in such a manner, that it seems to us less rational to attribute it to a dream of the imagination, than to a wickedly malicious trick, not entirely new, indeed, to the wit of man,—not, alas, deficient in corresponding effects, in every place, so to say, and every age. Ripamonti, who frequently on this subject of the anointing, ridicules, and still more frequently deplores, the popular credulity, here affirms



that he had seen this plastering, and then describes it.\* In the above-quoted letter, the gentlemen of the Board of Health relate the circumstance in the same terms; they speak of inspections, of experiments made with this matter upon dogs, without any injurious effect; and add, that they believe *such temerity proceeded rather from insolence than from any guilty design*: an opinion which evinces that, up to this time, they retained sufficient tranquillity of mind not to see what really did not exist. Other contemporary records, not to reckon their testimony as to the truth of the fact, signify, at the same time, that it was at first the opinion of many, that this beplastering had been done in joke, in a mere frolic; none of them speak of any one who denied it; and had there been any, they certainly would have mentioned them, were it only to call them irrational. I have deemed it not out of place to relate and put together these particulars, in part little known, in part entirely unknown, of a celebrated popular delirium; because in errors, and especially in the errors of a multitude, what seems to me most interesting and most useful to observe, is, the course they have taken, their appearances, and the ways by which they could enter men's minds, and hold sway there.

The city, already tumultuously inclined, was now turned upside down: the owners of the houses, with lighted straw, burned the besmeared parts; and passers by stopped, gazed, shuddered, murmured. Strangers, suspected of this alone, and at that time easily recognised by their dress, were arrested by the people in the streets, and consigned to prison. Here interrogations and examinations were made of captured, captors, and wit-

\* . . . . . "Et nos quoque ivimus visere. Maculæ erant sparsim inæqualiterque manantes, veluti si quis haustam sponsia saniem adpersissit, impressissetve parieti: et ianæ passim ostiaque ædium eadem adspersione contaminata cernebantur."—Page 75.



nesses; no one was found guilty: men's minds were still capable of doubting, weighing, understanding. The Board of Health issued a proclamation, in which they promised reward and impunity to any one who would bring to light the author or authors of the deed. "*In any wise, not thinking it expedient,*" say these gentlemen in the letter we have quoted, which bears date the 21st of May, but which was evidently written on the 19th, the day signified in the printed proclamation, "*that this crime should by any means remain unpunished, speciallic in times so perilous and suspicious, we have, for the consolation and peace of the people, this daie published an edicte,*" &c. In the edict, however, there is no mention, at least no distinct one, of that rational and tranquillizing conjecture they had suggested to the governor: a reservation which indicates at once a fierce prejudice in the people, and in themselves a degree of obsequiousness, so much the more blameable as the consequences might prove more pernicious.

While the Board was thus making inquiries, many of the public, as is usually the case, had already found the answer. Among those who believed this to be a poisonous ointment, some were sure it was an act of revenge of Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, for the insults received at his departure; some, that it was an idea of Cardinal Richelieu's to desolate Milan, and make himself master of it without trouble; others, again—it is not known with what motives—would have that the Count Collalto was the author of the plot, or Wallenstein, or this or that Milanese nobleman. There wanted not too, as we have said, those who saw nothing in this occurrence but a mischievous jest, and attributed it to students, to gentlemen, to officers who were weary of the siege of Casale. It did not appear, however, as had been dreaded, that infection and universal slaughter immediately ensued: and this was probably the cause



that this first fear began by degrees to subside, and the matter was, or seemed to be, forgotten.

There was, after all, a certain number of persons not yet convinced that it was indeed the plague; and because, both in the Lazzeretto, and in the city, some were restored to health, "it was affirmed," (the final arguments for an opinion contradicted by evidence are always curious enough,) "it was affirmed by the common people, and even yet by many partial physicians, that it was not really the plague, or all would have died."\* To remove every doubt, the Board of Health employed an expedient conformable to the necessity of the case, a means of speaking to the eye, such as the times may have required or suggested. On one of the festal days of Whitsuntide, the citizens were in the habit of flocking to the cemetery of San Gregorio, outside the Porta Orientale, to pray for the souls of those who had died in the former contagion, and whose bodies were there interred; and borrowing from devotion an opportunity of amusement and sight-seeing, every one went thither in his best and gayest clothing. One whole family, amongst others, had this day died of the plague. At the hour of the thickest concourse, in the midst of carriages, riders on horseback, and foot-passengers, the corpses of this family were, by order of the Board, drawn naked on a car to the above-named burying-ground; in order that the crowd might behold in them the manifest token, the revolting seal and symptom, of the pestilence. A cry of horror and consternation arose wherever the car was passing; a prolonged murmur was predominant where it had passed, another murmur preceded it. The real existence of the plague was more believed: besides, every day it continued to gain more belief by itself; and that very concourse would contribute not a little to propagate it.

\* Tadino, p. 93.



First, then, it was not the plague, absolutely not—by no means: the very utterance of the term was prohibited. Then, it was pestilential fevers: the idea was indirectly admitted in an adjective. Then, it was not the true nor real plague; that is to say, it was the plague, but only in a certain sense; not positively and undoubtedly the plague, but something to which no other name could be affixed. Lastly, it was the plague without doubt, without dispute: but even then another idea was appended to it, the idea of poison and witchcraft, which altered and confounded that conveyed in the word they could no longer repress.


There is no necessity, I imagine, to be well versed in the history of words and ideas, to perceive that many others have followed a similar course. Heaven be praised that there have not been many of such a nature, and of so vast importance, which contradict their evidence at such a price, and to which accessories of such a character may be annexed! It is possible, however, both in great and trifling concerns, to avoid, in great measure, so lengthened and crooked a path, by following the method which has been so long laid down, of observing, listening, comparing, and thinking, before speaking.

But speaking—this one thing by itself—is so much easier than all the others put together, that even we, I say, we men in general, are somewhat to be pitied.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

 HE difficulty of providing for the mournful exigencies of the times becoming daily greater, it was resolved, on the 4th of May, in the Council of the *Decurioni*, to have recourse for aid and favour to the governor; and accordingly, on the 22d, two members of that body were despatched to the camp, who represented to him the sufferings and poverty of the city: the enormous expenditure, the treasury exhausted and involved in debt, its future revenue in pledge, and the current taxes unpaid, by reason of the general impoverishment, produced by so many causes, and especially by the havoc of the military; they submitted to his consideration that, according to laws and customs, which had never been repealed, and by a special decree of Charles V., the expenses of the pestilence ought to be defrayed from the king's exchequer: that, in the plague of 1576, the governor, the Marquis of Ayamonte, had not indeed remitted all the taxes of the Chamber, but had relieved the city with forty thousand *scudi* from that same Chamber; and, finally, they demanded four things:—that, as once before already, the taxes should not be exacted; that the Chamber should grant some supplies of money; that the governor should acquaint the king with the misery of the city and the territory; and that the duchy



should be exempted from again quartering the military, as it had been already wasted and destroyed by the former troops. Spinola gave in reply condolences and fresh exhortations: he said he was sorry he did not happen to be in the city, that he might use all his endeavours for its relief; but he hoped that all would be compensated for by the zeal of these gentlemen: that this was the time to expend without parsimony, and to do all they could by every means: and as to the express demands, he would provide for them in the best way the times and existing necessities would allow. Nor was there any further result: there were, indeed, more journeys to and fro, new requisitions and replies; but I do not find that they came to any more determinate conclusions. Some time later, when the plague was at its greatest height, the governor thought fit to transfer his authority, by letters patent, to the High Chancellor Ferrer, he having, as he said, to attend to the war.

Together with this resolution, the *Decurioni* had also taken another, to request the Cardinal Archbishop to appoint a solemn procession, bearing through the city the body of San Carlo.

The good prelate refused, for many reasons. This confidence in an arbitrary measure displeased him; and he feared that if the effect should not correspond to it, which he had also reason to fear, confidence would be converted into offence.\* He feared further, that, *if indeed there were poisoners about*, the procession would afford too convenient opportunities for crime; *if there were not*, such a concourse of itself could not fail to disseminate the contagion more widely: *a danger far more*

\* Memoirs of successive Remarkable Events in Milan about the time of the Plague, in the year 1630, &c., compiled by D. Pio la Croce, Milan, 1730. It is evidently taken from an unpublished writing of an author who lived at the time of the pestilence; if indeed it be not a simple edition, rather than a new compilation.



*real.\** For the suppressed suspicions of poisonous ointments had, meanwhile, revived more generally, and more violently than ever.

People had again seen, or this time they fancied they had seen anointed, walls, entrances to public buildings, doors of private houses, and knockers. The news of these discoveries flew from mouth to mouth ; and, as it happens even more than usually in great prepossessions, the report produced the same effect that the sight of it would have done. The minds of the populace, ever more and more embittered by the actual presence of suffering, and irritated by the pertinacity of the danger, embraced this belief the more willingly ; for anger burns to execute its revenge, and, as a very worthy man acutely observes on this same subject,† would rather attribute evils to human wickedness, upon which it might vent its tormenting energies, than acknowledge them from a source which leaves no other remedy than resignation. A subtle, instantaneous, exceedingly penetrating poison, were words more than enough to explain the virulence, and all the other most mysterious and unusual accompaniments of the contagion. It was said that this venom was composed of toads, of serpents, of saliva and matter from infected persons, of worse still, of everything, in short, that wild and perverse fancy could invent which was foul and atrocious. To these was added witchcraft, by which any effect became possible, every objection lost its force, every difficulty was resolved. If the anticipated effects had not immediately followed upon the first anointing, the reason was now clear—it had been the imperfect attempt of novices in the art of sorcery ; now it was more matured, and the

\* “ Si unguenta scelerata et unctores in urbe essent . . . Si non essent . . . Certiusque adeo malum.”—*Ripamonti*, p. 185.

† P. Verri. *Observations on Torture: Italian Writers on Modern Political Economy*, vol. xvii. p. 205.



wills of the perpetrators were more bent upon their infernal project. Now, had any one still maintained that it had been a mere trick, had any one still denied the existence of a conspiracy, he would have passed for a deluded or obstinate person; if, indeed, he would not have fallen under the suspicion of being interested in diverting public scrutiny from the truth, of being an accomplice, a *poisoner*. The term very soon became common, solemn, tremendous. With such a persuasion, that poisoners there were, some must almost infallibly be discovered: all eyes were on the look out; every act might excite jealousy; and jealousy easily became certainty, and certainty fury.

Ripamonti relates two instances, informing us that he had selected them, not as the most outrageous among the many which daily occurred, but because, unhappily, he could speak of both as an eye-witness.\*

In the church of Sant' Antonio, on the day of I know not what solemnity, an old man, more than eighty years of age, was observed, after kneeling in prayer, to sit down, first, however, dusting the bench with his cloak. "That old man is anointing the benches!" exclaimed with one voice some women, who witnessed the act. The people who happened to be in church, (in church!) fell upon the old man; they tore his grey locks, heaped upon him blows and kicks, and dragged him out half dead, to convey him to prison, to the judges, to torture. "I beheld him dragged along in this way," says Ripamonti, "nor could I learn anything further about his end; but, indeed, I think he could not have survived many moments."

The other instance, which occurred the following day, was equally strange, but not equally fatal. Three French youths, in company, one a scholar, one a painter, and the third a mechanic, who had come to see Italy, to



study its antiquities, and to try and make money, had approached I know not exactly what part of the exterior of the cathedral, and stood attentively surveying it. One, two, or more passers-by, stopped, and formed a little group, to contemplate and keep their eye on these visitors, whom their costume, their head-dress, and their wallets, proclaimed to be strangers, and, what was worse, Frenchmen. As if to assure themselves that it was marble, they stretched out their hands to touch it. This was enough. They were surrounded, seized, tormented, and urged by blows to prison. Fortunately, the hall of justice was not far from the cathedral, and by still greater good fortune, they were found innocent, and set at liberty.

Nor did such things happen only in the city; the frenzy had spread like the contagion. The traveller, who was met by peasants out of the highway, or on the public road was seen loitering and amusing himself, or stretched upon the ground to rest; the stranger, in whom they fancied they saw something singular and suspicious in countenance or dress—these were poisoners; at the first report of whomsoever it might be—at the cry of a child—the alarm was given, and the people flocked together; the unhappy victims were pelted with stones, or, if taken, were violently dragged to prison. And the prison, up to a certain period, became a haven of safety.\*

But the *Decurioni*, not discouraged by the refusal of the judicious prelate, continued to repeat their entreaties, which were noisily seconded by the popular vote. The Bishop persevered for some time, and endeavoured to dissuade them: so much and no more could the discretion of one man do against the judgment of the times, and the pertinacity of the many. In this state of opinion, with the idea of danger, confused as it was at that

\* Ripamonti, pp. 91, 92.



period, disputed, and very far from possessing the evidence which we have for it, it will not be difficult to comprehend how his good reasons might, even in his own mind, be overcome by the bad ones of others. Whether, besides, in his subsequent concession, a feebleness of will had or had not any share, is a mystery of the human heart. Certainly if, in any case, it be possible to attribute error wholly to the intellect, and to relieve the conscience of responsibility, it is when one treats of those rare persons, (and, assuredly, the Cardinal was of the number,) throughout whose whole life is seen a resolute obedience to conscience, without regard to temporal interests of any kind. On the repetition of the entreaties, then, he yielded, gave his consent to the procession, and further, to the desire, the general eagerness, that the urn which contained the relics of San Carlo should afterwards remain exposed for eight days to the public concourse, on the high altar of the cathedral.

I do not find that the Board of Health, or the other authorities, made any opposition or remonstrance of any kind. The above-named Board merely ordered some precautions, which, without obviating the danger, indicated their apprehension of it. They gave more strict regulations about the admission of persons into the city, and to insure the execution of them, kept all the gates shut: as also, in order to exclude from the concourse, as far as possible, the infected and suspected, they caused the doors of the condemned houses to be nailed up; which, so far as the bare assertion of a writer,—and a writer of those times,—is to be valued in such matters, amounted to about five hundred.\*

Three days were spent in preparations; and on the 11th of June, which was the day fixed, the procession

\* Alleviation of the State of Milan, &c. by C. G. Cavatio della Soma-glia. Milan, 1653, p. 248.



started by early dawn from the cathedral. A long file of people led the way, chiefly women, their faces covered with ample silken veils, and many of them barefoot, and clothed in sackcloth. Then followed bands of artificers, preceded by their several banners, the different fraternities, in habits of various shades and colours; then came the brotherhoods of monks, then the secular clergy, each with the insignia of his rank, and bearing a lighted wax taper. In the centre, amidst the brilliancy of still more numerous torches, and the louder tones of the chanting, came the coffin, under a rich canopy, supported alternately by four canons, most pompously attired. Through the crystal sides appeared the venerated corpse, the limbs enveloped in splendid pontifical robes, and the skull covered with a mitre; and under the mutilated and decomposed features, some traces might still be distinguished of his former countenance, such as it was represented in pictures, and as some remembered seeing and honouring it during his life. Behind the mortal remains of the deceased pastor, (says Ripamonti,\* from whom we chiefly have taken this description,) and near him in person, as well as in merit, blood, and dignity, came the Archbishop Federigo. Then followed the rest of the clergy, and close behind them the magistrates, in their best robes of office; after them the nobility, some sumptuously apparelled, as for a solemn celebration of worship, others in token of humiliation, clothed in mourning, or walking barefoot, covered with sackcloth, and the hoods drawn over their faces, all bearing large torches. A mingled crowd of people brought up the rear.

The whole street was decked out as at a festival; the rich had brought out their most showy decorations; the fronts of the poorer houses were ornamented by their wealthier neighbours, or at the public expense; here

\* Pages 62—66.



and there, instead of ornaments, or over the ornaments themselves, were leafy branches of trees; everywhere were suspended pictures, mottoes, and emblematical devices; on the window-ledges were displayed vases, curiosities of antiquity, and valuable ornaments; and in every direction were torches. At many of these windows the sick, who were put under sequestration, beheld the pomp, and mingled their prayers with those of the passengers. The other streets were silent and deserted, save where some few listened at the windows to the floating murmur in the distance; while others, and among these even nuns might be seen, mounted upon the roofs, perchance they might be able to distinguish afar off the coffin, the retinue—in short, something.

The procession passed through all quarters of the city; at each of the crossways, or small squares, which terminate the principal streets in the suburbs, and which then preserved the ancient name of *carrobbi*, now reduced to only one, they made a halt, depositing the coffin near the cross which had been erected in every one by San Carlo, during the preceding pestilence, some of which are still standing; so that they returned not to the cathedral till considerably past midday.

But lo! the day following, just while the presumptuous confidence, nay, in many, the fanatical assurance prevailed, that the procession must have cut short the progress of the plague, the mortality increased in every class, in every part of the city, to such a degree, and with so sudden a leap, that there was scarcely any one who did not behold in the very procession itself, the cause and occasion of this fearful increase. But, oh wonderful and melancholy force of popular prejudices! the greater number did not attribute this effect to so great and so prolonged a crowding together of persons, nor to the infinite multiplication of fortuitous contact, but rather to the facilities afforded to the poisoners of



executing their iniquitous designs on a large scale. It was said that, mixing in the crowd, they had infected with their ointment everybody they had encountered. But as this appeared neither a sufficient nor appropriate means for producing so vast a mortality, which extended itself to every rank; as, apparently, it had not been possible, even for an eye the most watchful, and the most quick-sighted from suspicion, to detect any unctuous matter, or spots of any kind, during the march, recourse was had for the explanation of the fact to that other fabrication, already ancient, and received at that time into the common scientific learning of Europe, of magical and venemous powders; it was said that these powders, scattered along the streets, and chiefly at the places of halting, had clung to the trains of the dresses, and still more to the feet of those who had that day, in great numbers, gone about barefoot. "That very day, therefore, of the procession," says a contemporary writer,\* "saw piety contending with iniquity, perfidy with sincerity, and loss with acquisition." It was, on the contrary, poor human sense contending with the phantoms it had itself created.

From that day, the contagion continued to rage with increasing violence; in a little while, there was scarcely a house left untouched; and the population of the Lazzeretto, according to Somaglia above-quoted, amounted from two to twelve thousand. In the course of time, according to almost all reports, it reached sixteen thousand. On the fourth of July, as I find in another letter from the conservators of health to the Governor, the daily mortality exceeded five hundred. Still later, when the plague was at its height, it reached, and for some time remained at, twelve or fifteen hundred, according to the most common computation; and if we may credit

\* Agostino Lampugnano: *Of the Pestilence that happened in Milan, in the year 1630.* Milan, 1634, p. 44.



Tadino,\* it sometimes even exceeded three thousand five hundred.

It may be imagined what must now have been the difficulties of the *Decurioni*, upon whom was laid the burden of providing for the public necessities, and repairing what was still reparable in such a calamity. They were obliged every day to replace, every day to augment, public officers of numerous kinds: *Monatti*, by which denomination (even then at Milan of ancient date, and uncertain origin,) were designated those who were devoted to the most painful and dangerous services of a pestilence, viz. taking corpses from the houses, out of the streets, and from the *Lazzeretto*, transporting them on carts to the graves, and burying them; carrying or conducting the sick to the *Lazzeretto*, overlooking them there, and burning and cleansing infected or suspected goods: *Apparitori*,† whose special office it was to precede the carts, warning passengers, by the sound of a little bell, to retire: and *Commissarii*, who superintended both the other classes, under the immediate orders of the Board of Health. The Council had also to keep the *Lazzeretto* furnished with physicians, surgeons, medicines, food, and all the other necessities of an infirmary; and to provide and prepare new quarters for the newly-arising needs. For this purpose, they had cabins of wood and straw hastily constructed, in the unoccupied space within the *Lazzeretto*; and another *Lazzeretto* was erected, also of thatched cabins, with an enclosure of boards, capable of containing four thousand persons. These not being sufficient, two others were decreed; they even began to build them, but, from the deficiency of means of every kind, they remained uncompleted. Means, men, and courage failed, in proportion as the necessity for them increased. And not only did

\* Pages 115—117.

† A bailiff of the meanest kind.



the execution fall so far short of the projects and decrees—not only were many too clearly acknowledged necessities deficiently provided for, even in words, but they arrived at such a pitch of impotency and desperation, that many of the most deplorable and urgent cases were left without succour of any kind. A great number of infants, for example, died of absolute neglect, their mothers having been carried off by the pestilence. The Board of Health proposed that a place of refuge should be founded for these, and for destitute lying-in women, that something might be done for them, but they could obtain nothing. “The *Decurioni* of the Citie,” says Tadino, “were no less to be pityed, who found themselves harassed and oppressed by the Soldierie without any Bounds or Regarde whatsoever, as well as those in the unfortunate Duchy, seeing that they could get no Help or Prouision from the Gouvernor, because it happened to be a Tyme of War, and they must needs treat the Soldierie well.”\* So important was the taking of Casale! so glorious appeared the fame of victory, independent of the cause, of the object, for which they contended!

So also, an ample but solitary grave which had been dug near the Lazzeretto being completely filled with corpses; and fresh bodies, which became day by day more numerous, remaining therefore in every direction unburied, the magistrates, after having in vain sought for hands to execute the melancholy task, were compelled to acknowledge that they knew not what course to pursue. Nor was it easy to conjecture what would be the end, had not extraordinary relief been afforded. The President of the Board of Health solicited it almost in despair, and with tears in his eyes, from those two excellent friars who presided at the Lazzeretto; and Father Michele pledged himself to clear the city of dead



bodies in the course of four days. At the expiration of eight days he had not only provided for the immediate necessity, but for that also which the most ominous foresight could have anticipated for the future. With a friar for his companion, and with officers granted him for this purpose by the President, he set off out of the city in search of peasants; and partly by the authority of the Board of Health, partly by the influence of his habit and his words, he succeeded in collecting two hundred, whom he distributed in three separate places, to dig the ample graves. He then despatched *monatti* from the Lazzeretto to collect the dead, and on the day appointed his promise was fulfilled.

On one occasion, the Lazzeretto was left destitute of physicians; and it was only by offers of large salaries and honours, with much labour, and considerable delay, that they could procure them; and even then their number was far from sufficient for the need. It was often so reduced in provisions as to raise fears that the inmates would actually have to die of starvation; and more than once, while they were trying every method of raising money or supplies, with scarcely a hope of procuring them,—not to say of procuring them in time,—abundant assistance would most opportunely be afforded by the unexpected gift of some charitable private individual; for, in the midst of the common stupefaction and indifference to others, arising from continual apprehensions for themselves, there were yet hearts ever awake to the call of charity, and others in whom charity first sprang up on the failure of all earthly pleasures; as, in the destruction and flight of many whose duty it was to superintend and provide, there were others, ever healthy in body and unshaken in courage, who were always at their posts; while some there even were who, urged by compassion, assumed, and perseveringly sustained, cares to which their office did not call them.



The most general and most willing fidelity to the trying duties of the times, was conspicuously evinced by the clergy. In the Lazzerettoes, and throughout the city, their assistance never failed; where suffering was, there were they; they were always to be seen mingled with and interspersed among the faint and dying—faint and dying sometimes themselves. Together with spiritual succours, they were lavish, as far as they could be, of temporal ones, and freely rendered whatever services happened to be required. More than sixty parish-priests, in the city alone, died of the contagion: about eight out of every nine.

Federigo, as was to be expected from him, gave to all encouragement and example. Having seen almost the whole of his archiepiscopal household perish around him, solicited by relatives, by the first magistrates, and by the neighbouring princes, to withdraw from danger to some solitary country-seat, he rejected this counsel and these entreaties in the spirit with which he wrote to his clergy: "Be ready to abandon this mortal life, rather than the family, the children, committed to us; go forward into the plague, as to life, as to a reward, when there is one soul to be won to Christ."\* He neglected no precautions which did not impede him in his duty; on which point he also gave instructions and regulations to his clergy; and, at the same time, he minded not, nor appeared to observe danger, where it was necessary to encounter it, in order to do good. Without speaking of the ecclesiastics, whom he was constantly with, to commend and regulate their zeal, to arouse such as were lukewarm in the work, and to send them to the posts where others had perished, it was his wish that there should always be free access for any one who had need of him. He visited the Lazzerettoes, to administer consolation to the sick, and encourage-

\* Ripamonti, p. 164.



ment to the attendants; he traversed the city, carrying relief to the poor creatures sequestered in their houses, stopping at the doors and under the windows to listen to their lamentations, and to offer in exchange words of comfort and encouragement. In short, he threw himself into, and lived in the midst of, the pestilence, and was himself astonished, at the end, that he had come out uninjured.

Thus, in public calamities and in long-continued disturbance of settled habits, of whatever kind, there may always be beheld an augmentation, a sublimation of virtue; but, alas! there is never wanting, at the same time, an augmentation, far more general in most cases, of crime. This occasion was remarkable for it. The villains, whom the pestilence spared and did not terrify, found in the common confusion, and in the relaxation of all public authority, a new opportunity of activity, together with new assurances of impunity; nay, the administration of public authority itself came, in a great measure, to be lodged in the hands of the worst among them. Generally speaking, none devoted themselves to the offices of *monatti* and *apparitori* but men over whom the attractions of rapine and license had more influence than the terror of contagion, or any natural object of horror.

The strictest orders were laid upon these people; the severest penalties threatened to them; stations were assigned them; and commissaries, as we have said, placed over them: over both, again, magistrates and nobles were appointed in every district, with authority to enforce good government summarily on every opportunity. Such a state of things went on and took effect up to a certain period; but, with the increase of deaths and desolation, and the terror of the survivors, these officers came to be, as it were, exempted from all supervision; they constituted themselves, the *monatti* espe-



cially, arbiters of everything. They entered the houses like masters, like enemies; and, not to mention their plunder, and how they treated the unhappy creatures reduced by the plague to pass through such hands, they laid them,—these infected and guilty hands,—on the healthy—children, parents, husbands, wives, threatening to drag them to the Lazzeretto, unless they redeemed themselves, or were redeemed, with money. At other times they set a price upon their services, refusing to carry away bodies already corrupted, for less than so many *scudi*. It was believed (and between the credulity of one party and the wickedness of the other, belief and disbelief are equally uncertain), it was believed, and Tadino asserts it,\* that both *monatti* and *apparitori* purposely let fall from their carts infected clothes, in order to propagate and keep up the pestilence, which had become to them a means of living, a kingdom, a festival. Other wretches, feigning to be *monatti*, and carrying little bells tied to their feet, as these officers were required to do, to distinguish themselves and to give warning of their approach, introduced themselves into houses, and there exercised all kinds of tyranny. Some of these, open and void of inhabitants, or inhabited only by a feeble or dying creature, were entered by thieves in search of booty, with impunity; others were surprised and invaded by bailiffs, who there committed robberies and excesses of every description.

Together with the wickedness, the folly of the people increased: every prevailing error received more or less additional force from the stupefaction and agitation of their minds, and was more widely and more precipitately applied; while every one served to strengthen and aggravate that special mania about poisonings, which, in its effects and ebullitions, was often, as we have seen, itself another crime. The image of this supposed



danger beset and tortured the minds of the people far more than the real and existing danger.

"And while," says Ripamonti, "corpses, scattered here and there, or lying in heaps, ever before the eyes and surrounding the steps of the living, made the whole city like one immense sepulchre, a still more appalling symptom, a more intense deformity, was their mutual animosity, their licentiousness, and their extravagant suspicions. . . . Not only did they mistrust a friend, a guest; but those names which are the bonds of human affection, husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother, were words of terror; and, dreadful and infamous to tell! the domestic board, the nuptial bed, were dreaded as lurking-places, as receptacles of poison." \*

The imaginary vastness and strangeness of the plot distracted people's understandings, and subverted every reason for reciprocal confidence. Besides ambition and cupidity, which were at first supposed to be the motives of the poisoners, they fancied, they even believed at length, that there was something of diabolical, voluptuous delight in this anointing—an attraction predominating over the will. The ravings of the sick, who accused themselves of what they had apprehended from others, were considered as revelations, and rendered anything, so to say, credible of any one. And it would have far greater weight even than words, if it happened that delirious patients kept practising those manœuvres which it was imagined must be employed by the poisoners: a thing at once very probable, and tending to give better grounds for the popular persuasion and the assertions of numerous writers. In the same way, during the long and mournful period of judicial investigation on the subject of witchcraft, the confessions, and those not always extorted, of the accused, served not a little to promote and uphold the prevailing opinion on this



matter; for when an opinion obtains a prolonged and extensive sway, it is expressed in every manner, tries every outlet, and runs through every degree of persuasion; and it is difficult for all, or very many, to believe for a length of time that something extraordinary is being done, without some one coming forward who believes that he has done it.

Among the stories which this mania about poisoning gave rise to, one deserves to be mentioned for the credit it acquired, and the extended dissemination it met with. It was related, not, however, by every body in the same way (for that would be too remarkable a privilege for stories), but nearly so, that such a person, on such a day, had seen a carriage and six standing in the Square of the Cathedral, containing some great personage with a large suite, of lordly aspect, but dark and sunburnt, with fiery eyes, hair standing on end, and a threatening expression about the mouth. The spectator, invited to enter the equipage, complied; and after taking a turn or two, stopped and dismounted at the gate of a palace, where, entering with the rest, he beheld horrors and delights, deserts and gardens, caverns and halls; and in these were phantoms seated in council. Lastly, huge chests of money were shown to him, and he was told that he might take as much as he liked, if, at the same time, he would accept a little vessel of unctuous matter, and go about, anointing with it, through the city. Having refused to agree to the terms, he instantly found himself in the place whence he had been taken.

This story, generally believed there by the people, and, according to Ripamonti, not sufficiently ridiculed by many learned men,\* travelled through the whole of Italy, and even further: an engraving of it was made in Germany; and the electoral Archbishop of Mayence wrote to Cardinal Federigo, to ask what he



must believe of the wonderful prodigies related at Milan, and received for answer that they were mere dreams.

Of equal value, if not exactly of the same nature, were the dreams of the learned; and equally disastrous were they in their effects. Most of them saw the announcement at once and cause of their troubles, in a comet which appeared in the year 1628, and in a conjunction of Saturn with Jupiter; "the aforesaide Conjunction," writes Tadino, "inclining so clearlie over this Yeare 1630, that every Bodie could understand it. *Mortales parat morbos, miranda videntur.*"\* This prediction, fabricated I know not when nor by whom, was upon the tongue, as Ripamonti informs us,† of every body who was able to utter it. Another comet, which unexpectedly appeared in the June of the very year of the pestilence, was looked upon as a fresh warning, as an evident proof, indeed, of the anointing. They ransacked books, and found only in too great abundance examples of pestilence produced, as they said, by human efforts; they quoted Livy, Tacitus, Dionysius, Homer, and Ovid, and the numberless other ancients who have related or alluded to similar events; and of modern writers they had a still greater abundance. They cited a hundred other authors, who have treated theoretically, or incidentally spoken, of poisons, sorceries, unctions, and powders; Cesalpino was quoted, Cardano, Grevino, Salio, Pareo, Schenchio, Zachia, and finally, that fatal Delrio, who, if the renown of authors were in proportion to the good or evil produced by their works, would assuredly be one of the most eminent; that Delrio, whose *Disquisitions on Magic* (a digest of all that men, up to his time, had wildly devised on this subject), received as the most authoritative and irrefragable text-book, was, for more than a century, the rule and

\* Page 56.

† Page 273.



powerful impulse of legal, horrible, and uninterrupted murders.

From the inventions of the illiterate vulgar, educated people borrowed what they could accommodate to their ideas; from the inventions of the educated the vulgar borrowed what they could understand, and as they best could; and of all, an undigested, barbarous jumble was formed of public irrationality.

But that which still further excites our surprise is to see the physicians, those physicians, I say, who from the beginning had believed in the plague, and especially Tadino, who had predicted it, beheld it enter, and kept his eye, so to say, on its progress; who had affirmed and published that it was the plague, and was propagated by contact, and that if no opposition were made to it, it would become a general infection,—to see him, I say, draw a certain argument from these very consequences, for poisonous and magical unctions; to behold him, who in Carlo Colonna, the second that died in Milan, had marked delirium as an accompaniment of the malady, afterwards adduce in proof of unctions and a diabolical plot an incident such as this:—two witnesses deposed to having heard one of their friends, under the influence of the contagion, relate how some persons came one night into his room, to proffer him health and riches, if he would anoint the houses in the vicinity, and how, on his repeated refusal, they had taken their departure, and left in their stead a wolf under the bed, and three great cats upon it, “which remained there till break of day.”\* Had such a method of drawing conclusions been confined to one individual, it might have been attributed to his own extreme simplicity and want of common sense, and it would not have been worth our while to mention it; but, as it was received by many, it is a specimen of the human mind; and may serve to

\* Pp. 123, 124.



show how a well-regulated and reasonable train of ideas may be disordered by another train of ideas thrown directly across it. In other respects this Tadino was one of the most renowned men of his time at Milan.

Two illustrious and highly-deserving writers have asserted that Cardinal Federigo entertained some doubt about these poisonings.\* We would gladly give still more complete commendation to the memory of this excellent and benevolent man, and represent the good prelate in this, as in many other things, distinguished from the multitude of his contemporaries; but we are constrained, instead, to remark in him another example of the powerful influence of public opinion, even on the most exalted minds. It is evident,—from the way, at least, in which Ripamonti relates his thoughts on the subject,—that from the beginning he had had some doubts about it; and throughout he always considered that credulity, ignorance, fear, and a wish to excuse their long negligence in guarding against the contagion, had a considerable share in this opinion: that there was a good deal of exaggeration in it; but at the same time something of truth. There is a small work on this pestilence, written by his own hand, preserved in the Ambrosian Library; and the following is one among many instances where such a sentiment is expressed:—  
“On the method of compounding and spreading such poisonous ointments many and various things are reported, some of which we consider as true, while others appear to us entirely imaginary.”†

Some there were who, to the very last, and ever

\* Muratori, on the Treatment of the Pestilence, Modena, 1714, p. 117. P. Verri, in the treatise before quoted, p. 261.

† “Unguenta vero hæc aiebant componi conficique multifariam, fraudisque vias esse complures: quarum sane fraudum et artium, aliis quidem assentimur, alias vero fictas fuisse commentitiasque arbitramur.”  
—De Peste quæ, Mediolani, anno 1630, magnam stragem edidit. cap. v.



afterwards, thought that it was all imagination ; and we learn this, not from themselves, for no one had ever sufficient hardihood to expose to the public an opinion so opposed to that of the public ; but from those writers who deride it, or rebuke it, or confute it as the prejudice of a few, an error which no one had ever dared to make the subject of open dispute, but which nevertheless existed ; and we learn it, too, from one who had derived it from tradition. " I have met with sensible and well-informed people in Milan," says the good Muratori in the above-quoted passage, " who had received trustworthy accounts from their ancestors, and who were by no means persuaded of the truth of the facts concerning these poisonous ointments." It seems there was a secret outlet for truth, some remaining domestic confidence ; good sense still existed ; but it was kept concealed, for fear of the popular sense.

The magistrates, reduced in number daily, and disheartened and perplexed in everything, turned all their little vigilance, so to say, all the little resolution of which they were any longer capable, in search of these poisoners. And too easily did they think they had found them.

The judicial sentences which followed in consequence were not, certainly, the first of such a nature ; nor, indeed, can they be considered as uncommon in the history of jurisprudence. For, to say nothing of antiquity, and to mention only some instances in times more nearly approaching those of which we are treating, in Geneva, in 1530, afterwards in 1545, and again in 1574 ; in Casale Monferrato, in 1536 ; in Padua, in 1555 ; in Turin, in 1599 ; in Palermo, in 1526 ; and again in Turin, this same year 1630 ; here one, there many unhappy creatures were tried, and condemned to punishments the most atrocious, as guilty of having propagated the plague by means of powders, ointments, witchcraft,



or all these together. But the affair of the so-called anointings at Milan, as it was, perhaps, the longest remembered and the most widely talked of, so, perhaps, it is the most worthy of observation; or, to speak more exactly, there is further room to make observations upon it, from the remaining existence of more circumstantial and more extensive documents. And although a writer we have, not long ago, commended,\* has employed himself on them, yet, his object having been, not so much to give the history, properly speaking, as to extract thence political suggestions, for a still more worthy and important purpose, it seemed to us that the history of the plague might form the subject of a new work. But it is not a matter to be passed over in a few words; and to treat it with the copiousness it deserves would carry us too far beyond our limits. Besides, after we should have paused upon all these incidents, the reader would certainly no longer care to know those that remain in our narrative. Reserving, therefore, for another publication the account of the former, we will, at length, return to our characters, not to leave them again till we reach the end.

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\* P. Verri, work before mentioned.





## CHAPTER XXXIII.

**O**NE night, towards the end of August, exactly during the very height of the pestilence, Don Rodrigo returned to his residence at Milan, accompanied by the faithful Griso, one of the three or four who remained to him out of his whole household. He was returning from a company of friends, who were accustomed to assemble at a banquet, to divert the melancholy of the times; and on each occasion, some new friends were there, some old ones missing. That day he had been one of the merriest of the party; and, among other things, had excited a great deal of laughter among the company, by a kind of funeral eulogium on the Count Attilio, who had been carried off by the plague two days before.

In walking home, however, he felt a languor, a depression, a weakness in his limbs, a difficulty of breathing, and an inward burning heat, which he would willingly



have attributed entirely to the wine, to late hours, to the season. He uttered not a syllable the whole way; and the first word was, when they reached the house, to order Griso to light him to his room. When they were there, Griso observed the wild and heated look of his master's face, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, and peculiarly brilliant: he kept, therefore, at a distance; for, in these circumstances, every ragamuffin was obliged to look for himself, as the saying is, with a medical eye.

"I'm well, you see," said Don Rodrigo, who read in Griso's action the thoughts which were passing in his mind. "I'm very well; but I've taken . . . I've taken, perhaps, a little too much to drink. There was some capital wine! . . . But with a good night's sleep, it will go off. I'm very sleepy . . . Take that light away from before my eyes, it dazzles me . . . it teazes me! . . ."

"It's all the effects of the wine," said Griso, still keeping at a distance; "but lie down quickly, for sleep will do you good."

"You're right; if I can sleep . . . After all, I'm well enough. Put that little bell close by my bed, if I should want anything in the night: and be on the watch, you know, perchance you should hear me ring. But I shan't want anything . . . Take away that cursed light directly," resumed he, while Griso executed the order, approaching him as little as possible. "The ——! it plagues me excessively!" Griso then took the light, and wishing his master good night, took a hasty departure, while Rodrigo buried himself under the bed-clothes.

But the counterpane seemed to him like a mountain. He threw it off, and tried to compose himself to rest; for, in fact, he was dying of sleep. But scarcely had he closed his eyes, when he awoke again with a start, as if some wickedly-disposed person were giving him a shake; and he felt an increase of burning heat, an increase of delirium. His thoughts recurred to the season, the wine,



and his debauchery ; he would gladly have given them the blame of all ; but there was constantly substituted, of its own accord, for these ideas, that which was then associated with all, which entered, so to say, by every sense, which had been introduced into all the conversations at the banquet, since it was much easier to turn it into ridicule, than to get out of its reach—the pestilence.

After a long battle, he at length fell asleep, and began to dream the most gloomy and disquieting dreams in the world. He went on from one thing to another, till he seemed to find himself in a large church, in the first ranks, in the midst of a great crowd of people ; there he was, wondering how he had got there, how the thought had ever entered his head, particularly at such a time ; and he felt in his heart excessively vexed. He looked at the bystanders ; they had all pale emaciated countenances, with staring and glistening eyes, and hanging lips ; their garments were tattered, and falling to pieces ; and through the rents appeared livid spots, and swellings. “ Make room, you rabble ! ” he fancied he cried, looking towards the door, which was far, far away ; and accompanying the cry with a threatening expression of countenance, but without moving a limb ; nay, even drawing up his body to avoid coming in contact with those polluted creatures, who crowded only too closely upon him on every side. But not one of the senseless beings seemed to move, nor even to have heard him ; nay, they pressed still more upon him ; and, above all, it felt as if some one of them, with his elbow, or whatever it might be, was pushing against his left side, between the heart and the arm-pit, where he felt a painful, and as it were, heavy pressure. And if he writhed himself to get rid of this uneasy feeling, immediately a fresh unknown something began to prick him in the very same place. Enraged, he attempted to lay his



hand on his sword; and then it seemed as if the thronging of the multitude had raised it up level with his chest, and that it was the hilt of it which pressed so in that spot; and the moment he touched it he felt a still sharper stitch. He cried out, panted, and would have uttered a still louder cry, when, behold! all these faces turned in one direction. He looked the same way, perceived a pulpit, and saw slowly rising above its edge something round, smooth, and shining; then rose, and distinctly appeared, a bald head; then two eyes, a face, a long and white beard, and the upright figure of a friar, visible above the sides down to the girdle; it was friar Cristoforo. Darting a look around upon his audience, he seemed to Don Rodrigo to fix his gaze on him, at the same time raising his hand in exactly the attitude he had assumed in that room on the ground floor in his palace. Don Rodrigo then himself lifted up his hand in fury, and made an effort, as if to throw himself forward and grasp that arm extended in the air; a voice, which had been vainly and secretly struggling in his throat, burst forth in a great howl; and he awoke. He dropped the arm he had in reality uplifted, strove, with some difficulty, to recover the right meaning of everything, and to open his eyes, for the light of the already advanced day gave him no less uneasiness than that of the candle had done; recognised his bed and his chamber; understood that all had been a dream; the church, the people, the friar, all had vanished—all, but one thing—that pain in his left side. Together with this, he felt a frightful acceleration of palpitation at the heart, a noise and humming in his ears, a raging fire within, and a weight in all his limbs, worse than when he lay down. He hesitated a little before looking at the spot that pained him; at length, he uncovered it, and glanced at it with a shudder:—there was a hideous spot, of a livid purple hue.



The man saw himself lost; the terror of death seized him, and, with perhaps still stronger feeling, the terror of becoming the prey of *monatti*, of being carried off, of being thrown into the Lazzaretto. And as he deliberated on the way of avoiding this horrible fate, he felt his thoughts become more perplexed and obscure; he felt the moment drawing near that would leave him only consciousness enough to reduce him to despair. He grasped the bell, and shook it violently. Griso, who was on the alert, immediately answered its summons. He stood at some distance from the bed, gazed attentively at his master, and was at once convinced of what he had conjectured the night before.

"Griso!" said Don Rodrigo, with difficulty raising himself, and sitting up in his bed, "you have always been my trusty servant."

"Yes, Signor."

"I have always dealt well by you."

"Of your bounty."

"I think I may trust you . . . ."

"The — !"

"I am ill, Griso."

"I had perceived it."

"If I recover, I will heap upon you more favours than I have ever yet done."

Griso made no answer, and stood waiting to see to what all these preambles would lead.

"I will not trust myself to anybody but you," resumed Don Rodrigo; "do me a kindness, Griso."

"Command me," said he, replying with this usual formula to that unusual one.

"Do you know where the surgeon, Chiodo, lives?"

"I know very well."

"He is a worthy man, who, if he is well paid, will conceal the sick. Go and find him; tell him I will give him four, six *scudi* a visit; more, if he demands more.



Tell him to come here directly ; and do the thing cleverly, so that nobody may observe it."

" Well thought of," said Griso ; " I go, and return."

" Listen, Griso ; give me a drop of water first. I am so parched with thirst, I can bear it no longer."

" Signor, no," replied Griso ; " nothing without the doctor's leave. These are ticklish complaints ; there is no time to be lost. Keep quiet—in the twinkling of an eye I'll be here with Chiodo."

So saying, he went out, impatiently shutting the door behind him.

Don Rodrigo lay down, and accompanied him, in imagination, to Chiodo's house, counting the steps, calculating the time. Now and then he would turn to look at his left side, but quickly averted his face with a shudder. After some time, he began to listen eagerly for the surgeon's arrival ; and this effort of attention suspended his sense of illness, and kept his thoughts in some degree of order. All of a sudden, he heard a distant sound, which seemed, however, to come from the rooms, not the street. He listened still more intently ; he heard it louder, more quickly repeated ; and with it a trampling of footsteps. A horrid suspicion rushed into his mind. He sat up, and gave still greater attention ; he heard a dead sound in the next room as if a weight were being cautiously set down. He threw his legs out of bed, as if to get up ; peeped at the door, saw it open, and beheld before his eyes, and advancing towards him, two ragged and filthy red dresses, two ill-looking faces—in one word, two *monatti*. He distinguished, too, half of Griso's face, who, hidden behind the almost closed door, remained there on the look-out.

" Ah, infamous traitor ! . . . Begone, you rascals ! Biondino ! Carlotto ! help ! I'm murdered !" shouted Don Rodrigo. He thrust one hand under the bolster in search of a pistol ; grasped it ; drew it out ; but, at



his first cry, the *monatti* had rushed up to the bed; the foremost is upon him before he can do anything further; he wrenches the pistol out of his hand, throws it to a distance, forces him to lie down again, and keeps him there, crying with a grin of fury mingled with contempt, "Ah, villain! against the *monatti*! against the officers of the Board! against those who perform works of mercy!"

"Hold him fast till we carry him off," said his companion, going towards a trunk. Griso then entered, and began with him to force open the lock.

"Scoundrel!" howled Don Rodrigo, looking at him from under the fellow who held him down, and writhing himself under the grasp of his sinewy arms. "First let me kill that infamous rascal!" said he to the *monatti*, "and afterwards do with me what you will." Then he began to shout with loud cries to his other servants: but in vain he called; for the abominable Griso had sent them all off with pretended orders from their master himself, before going to propose to the *monatti* to come on this expedition, and divide the spoil.

"Be quiet, will you," said the villain who held him down upon the bed, to the unfortunate Don Rodrigo. And turning his face to the two who were seizing the booty, he cried to them, "Do your work like honest fellows."

"You! you!" roared Don Rodrigo to Griso, whom he beheld busying himself in breaking open, taking out money and clothes, and dividing them. "You! after! . . . Ah, fiend of hell! I may still recover! I may still recover!" Griso spoke not, nor, more than he could help, even turned in the direction whence these words proceeded.

"Hold him fast," said the other *monatto*; "he's frantic."

The miserable being became so indeed. After one



last and more violent effort of cries and contortions, he suddenly sank down senseless, in a swoon; he still, however, stared fixedly, as if spell-bound; and from time to time gave a feeble struggle, or uttered a kind of howl.

The *monatti* took him, one by the feet and the other by the shoulders, and went to deposit him on a hand-barrow which they had left in the adjoining room; afterwards one returned to fetch the booty; and then, taking up their miserable burden, they carried all away.

Griso remained behind to select in haste whatever more might be of use to him; and making them up into a bundle, took his departure. He had carefully avoided touching the *monatti*, or being touched by them; but in the last hurry of plunder, he had taken from the bed-side his master's clothes and shaken them, without thinking of anything but of seeing whether there were money in them. He was forced to think of it, however, the next day; for, while making merry in a public-house, he was suddenly seized with a cold shiver, his eyes became clouded, his strength failed him, and he sank to the ground. Abandoned by his companions, he fell into the hands of the *monatti*, who, despoiling him of whatever he had about him worth having, threw him upon a car, on which he expired before reaching the Lazzaretto, whither his master had been carried.

Leaving the latter, for the present, in this abode of suffering, we must now go in search of another, whose history would never have been blended with his, if it had not been forced upon him whether he would or not; indeed we may safely say, that neither one nor the other would have had any history at all:—I mean Renzo, whom we left in the new silk-mill under the assumed name of Antonio Rivolta.

He had been there about five or six months, if I am not mistaken, when, enmity having been openly declared between the Republic and the King of Spain, and there-



fore every apprehension of ill-offices and trouble from that quarter having ceased, Bortolo eagerly went to fetch him away, and take him again into his own employment, both because he was fond of him, and because Renzo, being naturally intelligent, and skilful in the trade, was of great use to the *factotum* in a manufactory, without ever being able to aspire at that office himself, from his inability to write. As this reason weighed with him in some measure, we were obliged, therefore, to mention it. Perhaps the reader would rather have had a more ideal Bortolo: but what can I say? he must imagine one for himself. We describe him as he was.

From that time Renzo continued to work with him. More than once or twice, and especially after having received one of those charming letters from Agnese, he had felt a great fancy to enlist as a soldier, and make an end of it: nor were opportunities wanting; for just during that interval, the Republic often stood in need of men. The temptation had sometimes been the more pressing to Renzo, because they even talked of invading the Milanese; and it naturally appeared to him that it would be a fine thing to return in the guise of a conqueror to his own home, to see Lucia again, and for once come to an explanation with her. But, by clever management, Bortolo had always contrived to divert him from this resolution. "If they have to go there," he would say, "they can go well enough without you, and you can go there afterwards at your convenience; if they come back with a broken head, won't it be better to have been out of the fray? There won't be wanting desperate fellows on the highway for robberies. And before they set foot there! . . . As for me, I am somewhat incredulous; these fellows bark; but let them; the Milanese is not a mouthful to be so easily swallowed. Spain is concerned in it, my dear fellow: do you know



what it is to deal with Spain? St. Mark is strong enough at home: but it will take something more than that. Have patience: ar'n't you well off here? . . . I know what you would say to me; but if it be decreed above that the thing succeed, rest assured it will succeed better by your playing no fooleries. Some saint will help you. Believe me, it's no business of yours. Do you think it would suit you to leave winding silk to go and murder? What would you do among such a set of people? It requires men who are made for it."

At other times Renzo resolved to go secretly, disguised, and under a false name. But from this project, too, Bortolo always contrived to divert him with arguments that may be too easily conjectured.

The plague having afterwards broken out in the Milanese territory, and even, as we have said, on the confines of the Bergamascan, it was not long before it extended itself hither, and . . . be not dismayed, for I am not going to give another history of this: if any one wishes it, it may be found in a work by one Lorenzo Ghirardelli, written by public order; a scarce and almost unknown work, however, although it contains, perhaps, more fully than all the rest put together, the most celebrated descriptions of pestilences: on so many things does the celebrity of books depend! What I would say is, that Renzo also took the plague, and cured himself, that is to say, he did nothing; he was at the point of death, but his good constitution conquered the strength of the malady: in a few days he was out of danger. With the return of life, its cares, its wishes, hopes, recollections, and designs, were renewed with double poignancy and vigour; which is equivalent to saying that he thought more than ever of Lucia. What had become of her, during the time that life was, as it were, an exception? And at so short a distance from her, could he learn nothing? And to remain, God knew how long!



in such a state of uncertainty! And even when this should be removed, when, all danger being over, he should learn that Lucia still survived; there would always remain that other knot, that obscurity about the vow.—I'll go myself; I'll go and learn about everything at once,—said he to himself, and he said it before he was again in a condition to steady himself upon his feet.—Provided she lives! Ah, if she lives! I'll find her, that I will; I'll hear once from her own lips what this promise is, I'll make her see that it cannot hold good, and I'll bring her away with me, her, and that poor Agnese, if she's living! who has always wished me well, and I'm sure she does so still. The capture! aha! the survivors have something else to think about now. People go about safely, even here, who have on them . . . . Will there have been a safe-conduct only for bailiffs? And at Milan, everybody says that there are other disturbances there. If I let so good an opportunity pass—(the plague! Only see how that revered instinct of referring and making subservient everything to ourselves, may sometimes lead us to apply words!)—I may never have such another!—

It is well to hope, my good Renzo. Scarcely could he drag himself about, when he set off in search of Bortolo, who had so far succeeded in escaping the pestilence, and was still kept in reserve. He did not go into the house, but, calling to him from the street, made him come to the window.

“Aha!” said Bortolo: “you’ve escaped it, then! It’s well for you!”

“I’m still rather weak in my limbs, you see, but as to the danger, it’s all over.”

“Aye, I’d gladly be in your shoes. It used to be everything to say, ‘I’m well;’ but now it counts for very little. He who is able to say, ‘I’m better,’ can indeed say something!”



Renzo expressed some good wishes for his cousin, and imparted to him his resolution.

"Go, this time, and Heaven prosper you!" replied he. "Try to avoid justice, as I shall try to avoid the contagion; and, if it be God's will that things should go well with us both, we shall meet again."

"Oh, I shall certainly come back: God grant I may not come alone! Well: we will hope."

"Come back in company; for, if God wills, we will all work together, and make up a good party. I only hope you may find me alive, and that this odious epidemic may have come to an end!"

"We shall see each other again, we shall see each other again; we must see each other again!"

"I repeat, God grant it!"

For several days Renzo practised taking a little exercise, to assay and recruit his strength; and no sooner did he deem himself capable of performing the journey, than he prepared to set out. Under his clothes he buckled a girdle round his waist, containing those fifty *scudi* upon which he had never laid a finger, and which he had never confided to any one, not even to Bortolo; he took a few more pence with him, which he had saved day after day, by living very economically; put under his arm a small bundle of clothes, and in his pocket a character, with the name of Antonio Rivolta, which had been very willingly given him by his second master; in one pocket of his trowsers he placed a large knife, the least that an honest man could carry in those days; and set off on his peregrinations, on the last day of August, three days after Don Rodrigo had been carried to the Lazzeretto. He took the way towards Lecco, wishing, before venturing himself in Milan, to pass through his village, where he hoped to find Agnese alive, and to begin by learning from her some of the many things he so ardently longed to know.



The few who had recovered from the pestilence were, among the rest of the population, indeed like a privileged class. A great proportion of the others languished or died; and those who had been hitherto untouched by the contagion lived in constant apprehension of it. They walked cautiously and warily about, with measured steps, gloomy looks, and haste at once and hesitation: for everything might be a weapon against them to inflict a mortal wound. These, on the contrary, almost certain of safety (for to have the plague twice was rather a prodigious than a rare instance), went about in the midst of the contagion, freely and boldly, like the knights during one part of the middle ages; who, encased in steel, wherever steel might be, and mounted on chargers, themselves defended as impenetrably as possible, went rambling about at hazard (whence their glorious denomination of knights-errant), among a poor pedestrian herd of burghers and villagers, who, to repel and ward off their blows, had nothing on them but rags. Beautiful, sapient, and useful profession! a profession fit to make the first figure in a treatise on political economy!

With such security, tempered, however, by the anxiety with which our readers are acquainted, and by the frequent spectacle and perpetual contemplation of the universal calamity, Renzo pursued his homeward way, under a beautiful sky and through a beautiful country, but meeting nothing, after passing wide tracts of most mournful solitude, but some wandering shadow rather than a living being, or corpses carried to the grave, unhonoured by funeral rites, unaccompanied by the funeral dirge. About noon he stopped in a little wood, to eat a mouthful of bread and meat which he had brought with him. Of fruit, he had only too much at his command the whole length of the way,—figs, peaches, plums, and apples at will; he had only to enter a vineyard, and



extend his arm to gather them from the branches, or to pick them up from the ground, which was thickly strewn with them ; for the year was extraordinarily abundant in fruit of every kind, and there was scarcely any one to take any care of it. The grapes even hid themselves beneath the leaves, and were left for the use of the first comer.

Towards evening, he discovered his own village. At this sight, though he must have been prepared for it, he felt his heart begin to beat violently ; he was at once assailed by a host of mournful recollections and presentiments : he seemed to hear ringing in his ears those inauspicious tolls of the bell which had, as it were, accompanied and followed him in his flight from the village ; and, at the same time, he heard, so to say, the deathlike silence which actually reigned around. He experienced still stronger agitation on entering the churchyard ; and worse still awaited him at the end of his walk ; for the spot he had fixed upon as his resting-place, was the dwelling which he had once been accustomed to call Lucia's cottage. Now it could not be, at the best, more than Agnese's ; and the only favour he begged of Heaven was, that he might find her living and in health. And in this cottage he proposed asking for a bed, rightly conjecturing that his own would no longer be a place of abode for anything but rats and polecats.

To reach that point, therefore, without passing through the village, he took a little by-path that ran behind it, the very one along which he had gone, in good company, on that notorious night when he tried to surprise the Curate. About half way stood, on one side, his own house, and on the other his vineyard ; so that he could enter both for a moment in passing, to see a little how his own affairs were going on.

He looked forward, as he pursued his way, anxious, and at the same time afraid, to meet with any one ; and



after a few paces, he saw a man seated in his shirt on the ground, resting his back against a hedge of jessamine, in the attitude of an idiot; and from this, and afterwards from his countenance, he thought it was that poor simpleton Gervase, who had gone as the second witness in his ill-fated expedition. But going a little nearer, he perceived that it was, instead, the sprightly Tonio, who had brought his brother with him on that occasion. The contagion, robbing him at once of mental as well as bodily vigour, had developed in his look and every action the slight and veiled germ of likeness which he bore to his half-witted brother.

"Oh Tonio!" said Renzo, stopping before him, "is it you?"

Tonio raised his eyes, without moving his head.

"Tonio! don't you know me?"

"Whoever has got it, has got it," answered Tonio, gazing at him with open mouth.

"It's on you, eh? poor Tonio: but don't you know me again?"

"Whoever has got it, has got it," replied he, with a kind of idiotic smile. Seeing he could draw nothing further from him, Renzo pursued his way, still more disconsolate. Suddenly he saw, turning the corner, and advancing towards him, a black object, which he quickly recognised as Don Abbondio. He walked slowly, carrying his stick like one who is alternately carried by it; and the nearer he approached, the more plainly might it be discerned, in his pale and emaciated countenance, and in every look, that he, too, had had to pass through his share of the storm. He looked askance at Renzo; it seemed, and it did not seem, like him; there was something like a stranger in his dress; but it was a stranger from the territory of Bergamo.

—It is he, and nobody else!—said he to himself, raising his hands to Heaven, with a motion of dissatis-



fied surprise, and the staff he carried in his right hand suddenly checked in its passage through the air; and his poor arms might be seen shaking in his sleeves, where once there was scarcely room for them. Renzo hastened to meet him, and made a low reverence; for, although they had quitted each other in the way the reader knows, he was always, nevertheless, his Curate.

"Are you here—you?" exclaimed the latter.

"I am indeed, as you see. Do you know anything of Lucia?"

"What do you suppose I can know? I know nothing. She's at Milan, if she's still in this world. But you . . ."

"And Agnese, is she alive?"

"She may be; but who do you suppose can tell? She's not here. But . . ."

"Where is she?"

"She's gone to live at Valsassina, among her relations at Pasturo, you know; for they say the plague doesn't make the havoc there it does here. But you, I say . . ."

"Oh, I'm very sorry. And Father Cristoforo? . . ."

"He's been gone for some time. But . . ."

"I know that, they wrote and told me so much; but I want to know if he hasn't yet returned to these parts."

"Nay; they've heard nothing further about him. But you . . ."

"I'm very sorry to hear this too."

"But you, I say, what, for Heaven's sake, are you coming to do in this part of the world? Don't you know about that affair of your apprehension?"

"What does it matter? They've something else to think about. I was determined to come for once, and see about my affairs. And isn't it well enough known? . . ."

"What would you see about, I wonder? for now there's no longer anybody, or anything. And is it wise of you, with that business of your apprehension, to come



hither exactly to your own village, into the wolf's very mouth? Do as an old man advises you, who is obliged to have more judgment than you, and who speaks from the love he bears you; buckle on your shoes well, and set off, before any one sees you, to where you came from; and if you've been seen already, return only the more quickly. Do you think that this is the air for you? Don't you know they've been to look for you? that they've ransacked everything, and turned all upside down? . . . ."

"I know it too well, the scoundrels!"

"But then . . . ."

"But if I tell you I don't care! And is that fellow alive yet? is he here?"

"I tell you nobody's here; I tell you, you mustn't think about things here; I tell you . . . ."

"I ask if *he*'s here?"

"Oh, sacred Heaven! Speak more quietly. Is it possible you've all that fieriness about you after so many things have happened?"

"Is he here, or is he not?"

"Well, well, he's not here. But the plague, my son, the plague! Who would go travelling about in such times as these?"

"If there was nothing else but the plague in this world . . . . I mean for myself: I've had it, and am free."

"Indeed, indeed! what news is this? When one has escaped a danger of this sort, it seems to me he should thank Heaven, and . . . ."

"And so I do."

"And not go to look for others, I say. Do as I advise."

"You've had it too, Signor Curate, if I mistake not."

"I had it! Obstinate and bad enough it was! I'm here by miracle; I need only say it has left me in the state you see. Now, I had just need of a little quiet, to



set me to rights again. I was beginning to be a little better . . . . In the name of Heaven, what have you come to do here? Go back . . . .”

“You’re always at me with that *go back*. As for going back, I have reasons enough for not stirring. You say, what are you come for? what are you come for? I’ve come home.”

“Home . . . .”

“Tell me, are many dead here? . . . .”

“Alas, alas!” exclaimed Don Abbondio; and beginning with Perpetua, he entered upon a long enumeration of individuals and entire families. Renzo had certainly expected something of the kind, but, on hearing so many names of acquaintances, friends, and relatives, (he had lost his parents many years before,) he stood overcome with grief, his head hung down, and only exclaiming from time to time, “Poor fellow! poor girl! poor creatures!”

“You see,” continued Don Abbondio; “and it isn’t yet over. If those who are left don’t use their senses this time, and drive the whims out of their brains, there’s nothing for it but the end of the world.”

“Don’t be afraid; I’ve no intentions of stopping here.”

“Ah! thank Heaven, you at last understand! And you’d better make up your mind to return . . . .”

“Don’t you trouble yourself about that.”

“What! didn’t you once want to do something more foolish than this even?”

“Never mind me, I say; that is my business; I’m more than seven years old. I hope, at any rate, you won’t tell anybody you’ve seen me. You are a priest; I am one of your flock; you won’t betray me?”

“I understand,” said Don Abbondio, sighing pettishly, “I understand. You would ruin yourself and me too. You haven’t gone through enough already,



I suppose ; and I haven't gone through enough either. I understand, I understand." And continuing to mutter these last words between his teeth, he again resumed his way.

Renzo stood there, chagrined and discontented, thinking where he could find a lodging. In the funereal list recounted by Don Abbondio, there was a family of peasants, who had been all swept off by the pestilence, excepting one youth, about Renzo's own age, who had been his companion from infancy ; the house was out of the village, a very little way off. Hither he determined to bend his steps and ask for a night's lodging.

He had nearly reached his own vineyard, and was soon able to infer from the outside in what state it was. Not a single tree, not a single leaf, which he had left there, was visible above the wall. If anything blossomed there, it was all what had grown during his absence. He went up to the opening, (of a gate there was no longer the least sign ;) he cast a glance around : poor vineyard ! For two successive winters the people of the neighbourhood had gone to chop firewood "in the garden of that poor fellow," as they used to say. Vines, mulberry-trees, fruits of every kind, all had been rudely torn up, or cut down to the trunk. Vestiges, however, of former cultivation still appeared ; young shoots, in broken lines, which retained, nevertheless, traces of their now desolated rows ; here and there stumps and sprouts of mulberry, fig, peach, cherry, and plum-trees ; but even these seemed overwhelmed and choked by a fresh, varied, and luxuriant progeny, born and reared without the help of man. There was a thick mass of nettles, ferns, tares, dog-grass, rye-grass, wild oats, green amaranths, succory, wild sorrel, fox-glove, and other similar plants ; all those, I mean, which the peasant of every country has included in one large class at his pleasure, denominating them weeds. There was a



medley of stalks, each trying to out-top the others in the air, or rivalling its fellow in length upon the ground—aiming, in short, to secure for itself the post of honour in every direction; a mixture of leaves, flowers, and fruit, of a hundred colours, forms, and sizes; ears of corn, Indian corn, tufts, bunches, and heads, of white, yellow, red, and blue. In the midst of this medley, other taller and more graceful, though not, for the most part, more valuable plants, were prominently conspicuous; the Turkish vine soared above all the rest, with its long and reddish branches, its large and magnificent dark-green leaves, some already fringed with purple at the top, and its bending clusters of grapes; adorned below with berries of a bluish-grey tinge, higher up of a purple hue, then green, and at the very top with whitish little flowers. There was also the bearded yew, with its large rough leaves down to the ground, the stem rising perpendicularly to the sky, and the long pendent branches scattered, and, as it were, bespangled with bright yellow blossoms; thistles, too, with rough and prickly leaves and calyxes, from which issued little tufts of white or purple flowers, or else light and silvery plumes, which were quickly swept away by the breeze. Here a little bunch of bindweed, climbing up and twining around fresh suckers from a mulberry-tree, had entirely covered them with its pendent leaves, which pointed to the ground, and adorned them at the top with its white and delicate little bells. There a red-berried bryony had twisted itself among the new shoots of a vine, which, seeking in vain a firmer support, had reciprocally entwined its tendrils around its companion, and, mingling their feeble stalks, and their not very dissimilar leaves, they mutually drew each other upward, as often happens with the weak, who take one another for their stay. The bramble intruded everywhere; it stretched from one bough to another;



now mounting, and again turning downward, it bent the branches, or straightened them, according as it happened; and crossing before the very threshold, seemed as if it were placed there to dispute the passage even with the owner.

But he had no heart to enter such a vineyard, and probably did not stand as long looking at it as we have taken to make this little sketch. He went forward; a little way off stood his cottage; he passed through the garden, trampling under foot by hundreds the intrusive visitors with which, like the vineyard, it was peopled and overgrown. He just set foot within the threshold of one of the rooms on the ground floor; at the sound of his footsteps, and on his looking in, there was a hubbub, a scampering to and fro of rats, a rush under the rubbish that covered the whole floor; it was the relics of the German soldiers' beds. He raised his eyes, and looked round upon the walls; they were stripped of plaster, filthy, blackened with smoke. He raised them to the ceiling—a mass of cobwebs. Nothing else was to be seen. He took his departure, too, from this desolate scene, twining his fingers in his hair; returned through the garden, retracing the path he had himself made a moment before, took another little lane to the left, which led into the fields, and, without seeing or hearing a living creature, arrived close to the house he had designed as his place of lodging. It was already evening; his friend was seated outside the door on a small wooden bench, his arms crossed on his breast, and his eyes fixed upon the sky, like a man bewildered by misfortunes, and rendered savage by long solitude. Hearing a footstep, he turned round, looked who was coming, and to what he fancied he saw in the twilight, between the leaves and branches, cried in a loud voice, as he stood up and raised both his hands, "Is there nobody but me? didn't I do enough yesterday? Let



me alone a little, for that, too, will be a work of charity."

Renzo, not knowing what this meant, replied to him, calling him by name.

"Renzo . . . ." said he, in a tone at once of exclamation and interrogation.

"Myself," said Renzo; and they hastened to meet each other.

"Is it really you?" said his friend, when they were near. "Oh, how glad I am to see you! Who would have thought it? I took you for Paolin de' Morti,\* who is always coming to torment me to go and bury some one. Do you know I am left alone?—alone! alone! as a hermit!"

"I know it too well," said Renzo. And interchanging in this manner, and crowding upon one another, welcomings, questions, and answers, they went into the house together. Here, without interrupting the conversation, his friend busied himself in doing some little honour to his guest, as he best could on so sudden a warning, and in times like those. He set some water on the fire, and began to make the *polenta*; but soon gave up the pestle to Renzo, that he might proceed with the mixing, and went out, saying, "I'm all by myself, you see, all by myself!"

By and by he returned with a small pail of milk, a little salt meat, a couple of cream-cheeses, and some figs and peaches; and all being ready, and the *polenta* poured out upon the trencher, they sat down to table, mutually thanking each other, one for the visit, the other for the reception he met with. And, after an absence of nearly two years, they suddenly discovered that they were much greater friends than they ever thought they were when they saw each other almost every day; for, as the manuscript here remarks, events had occurred to both

\* One of the friars of the Order of Death.



which make one feel what a cordial to the heart is kindly feeling, both that which one experiences oneself, and that which one meets with in others.

True, no one could supply the place of Agnese to Renzo, nor console him for her absence, not only on account of the 'old and special affection he entertained for her, but also because, among the things he was anxious to clear up, one there was of which she alone possessed the key. He stood for a moment in doubt whether he should not first go in search of her, since he was so short a distance off; but, considering that she would know nothing of Lucia's health, he kept to his first intention of going at once to assure himself of this, to confront the one great trial, and afterwards to bring the news to her mother. Even from his friend, however, he learnt many things of which he was ignorant, and gained some light on many points with which he was but partially acquainted, both about Lucia's circumstances, the prosecutions instituted against himself, and Don Rodrigo's departure thence, followed by his whole suite, since which time he had not been seen in the neighbourhood; in short, about all the intricate circumstances of the whole affair. He learnt also (and it was to him an acquisition of no little importance) to pronounce properly the name of Don Ferrante's family: Agnese, indeed, had written it to him by her secretary; but Heaven knows how it was written, and the Bergamascan interpreter had read it in such a way,—had given him such a word,—that, had he gone with it to seek direction to his house in Milan, he would probably have found no one who could have conjectured for whom he was making inquiry. Yet this was the only clue he possessed that could put him in the way of learning tidings of Lucia. As to justice, he was ever more and more convinced that this was a hazard remote enough not to give him much concern: the Signor *Podestà* had



died of the plague; who knew when a substitute would be appointed? the greater part of the bailiffs were carried off; and those that remained had something else to do than look after old matters. He also related to his friend the vicissitudes he had undergone, and heard in exchange a hundred stories about the passage of the army, the plague, the poisoners, and other wonderful matters. "They are miserable things," said his friend, accompanying Renzo into a little room which the contagion had emptied of occupants; "things which we never could have thought to see, and after which we can never expect to be merry again all our lives; but nevertheless, it is a relief to speak of them to one's friends."

By break of day they were both down-stairs; Renzo equipped for his journey, with his girdle hidden under his doublet, and the large knife in his pocket, but otherwise light and unencumbered, having left his little bundle in the care of his host. "If all goes well with me," said he; "if I find her alive; if . . . enough . . . I'll come back here; I'll run over to Pasturo to carry the good news to poor Agnese, and then, and then . . . But if, by ill-luck, by ill-luck which God forbid! . . . then I don't know what I shall do; I don't know where I shall go: only, assuredly, you will never see me again in these parts!" And, as he said so, standing in the door-way which led into the fields, he cast his eyes around, and contemplated, with a mixed feeling of tenderness and bitter grief, the sun-rising of his own country, which he had not seen for so long a time. His friend comforted him with bright hopes and prognostications, and made him take with him some little store of provision for that day; then, accompanying him a mile or two on his way, he took his leave with renewed good wishes.

Renzo pursued his way deliberately and easily, as all



he cared for was to reach the vicinity of Milan that day, so that he might enter next morning early, and immediately begin his search. The journey was performed without accident; nor was there anything which particularly attracted his attention, except the usual spectacles of misery and sorrow. He stopped in due time, as he had done the day before, in a grove, to refresh himself and take breath. Passing through Monza, before an open shop where bread was displayed for sale, he asked for two loaves, that he might not be totally unprovided for under any circumstances. The shopkeeper, beckoning to him not to enter, held out to him, on a little shovel, a small basin containing vinegar and water, into which he desired him to drop the money in payment; he did so; and then the two loaves were handed out to him, one after another, with a pair of tongs, and deposited by Renzo one in each pocket.

Towards evening he arrived at Greco, without, however, knowing its name; but, by the help of some little recollection of the places which he retained from his former journey, and his calculation of the distance he had already come from Monza, he guessed that he must be tolerably near the city, and therefore left the high-road and turned into the fields in search of some *cascinotto*, where he might pass the night; for with inns he was determined not to meddle. He found more than he looked for: for seeing a gap in a hedge which surrounded the yard of a cow-house, he resolved at any rate to enter. No one was there: he saw in one corner a large shed with hay piled up beneath it, and against this a ladder was reared; he once more looked round, and then, mounting at a venture, laid himself down to pass the night there, and quickly fell asleep, not to awake till morning. When he awoke, he crawled towards the edge of this great bed, put his head out, and seeing no one, descended as he had gone up, went out where he




had come in, pursued his way through little by-paths, taking the cathedral for his polar star; and, after a short walk, came out under the walls of Milan, between the Porta Orientale and the Porta Nuova, and rather nearer to the latter.





## CHAPTER XXXIV.

S to the way of entering the city, Renzo had heard, in general terms, that there were very strict orders not to admit persons without a certificate of health ; but that, in fact, it was easy enough for any one to effect an entrance who at all knew how to help himself, and to seize opportunities. So it was ; and, letting alone the general causes why every order, in those days, was so imperfectly executed ; letting alone the particular ones, which rendered the rigorous execution of this so impracticable, Milan was now reduced to such a pass that no one could see of what use it was to defend it, or against what it was to be defended ; and whoever came thither might be considered rather to risk his own health than to endanger that of the inhabitants.

Upon this information, Renzo's intention was to attempt a passage at the first gate upon which he might happen to light ; and if any obstacle presented itself, to go round outside, until he found another more easy of access. And Heaven knows how many gates he thought Milan must have !

Arrived, then, before the walls, he stood still to look about him, as one does who, not knowing which will be the best way to bend his steps, seems as if he awaited and asked direction from anything. But he could discover nothing either way but two reaches of a winding road, and before him a part of the wall ; in no quarter was there a symptom of a human being, except that in



one spot, on the platform, might be seen a dense column of black and murky smoke, which expanded itself as it mounted, and curled into ample circles, and afterwards dispersed itself through the grey and motionless atmosphere. They were clothes, beds, and other articles of infected furniture which were being committed to the flames: and such melancholy conflagrations were constantly to be seen, not only here, but on every side of the wall.

The weather was close, the air thick and heavy, the whole sky veiled by a uniform, sluggish cloud or mist, which seemed to forbid the sun, without giving promise of rain; the country round was partly uncultivated, and the whole looked parched; vegetation was stunted, and not a drop of dew moistened the drooping and withered leaves. This solitude, this deep silence, so near a large mass of habitations, added new consternation to Renzo's disquietude, and rendered his thoughts still more gloomy.

Having stood thus for a moment, he took the right hand, at a venture, directing his steps, without being aware of it, towards the Porta Nuova, which, though close at hand, he had not been able to perceive, on account of a bastion behind which it was concealed. After taking a few steps, a tinkling of little bells fell upon his ear, which ceased and was renewed at intervals, and then the voices of men. He went forward; and having turned the corner of the bastion, the first thing that met his eye on the esplanade before the gate was a small wooden house, or sentry-box, at the doorway of which stood a guard, leaning on his musket with a languid and negligent air; behind was a fence, composed of stakes, and beyond that the gate, that is to say, two wings of the wall connected by a roof above, which served to shelter the door, both leaves of which were wide open, as was also the wicket of the palisade.



Exactly before the opening, however, stood a melancholy impediment—a handbarrow, placed upon the ground, on which two *monatti* were laying out a poor creature to bear him away: it was the head of the custom-house officers, in whom the plague had been discovered just before. Renzo stood still where he was, awaiting the issue. The party being gone, and no one appearing to shut the gate again, now seemed to be his time; he hastened forward; but the ill-looking sentinel called out to him: “Holla!” He instantly stopped, and winking at the man, drew out a half ducat, and showed it him. The fellow, either having already had the pestilence, or fearing it less than he loved half ducats, beckoned to Renzo to throw it to him; and soon seeing it roll at his feet, muttered, “Go forward, quickly.” Renzo gave him no occasion to repeat the order; he passed the palisade, entered the gate, and went forward without any one observing or taking any notice of him; except that when he had gone perhaps forty paces, he heard another “holla” from a toll-gatherer who was calling after him. This he pretended not to hear, and instead of turning round, only quickened his pace. “Holla!” cried the collector again, in a tone, however, which rather indicated vexation than a determination to be obeyed; and finding he was not obeyed, he shrugged his shoulders and returned into the house, like one who was more concerned about not approaching too near to passengers, than inquiring into their affairs.

The street inside this gate, at that time, as now, ran straight forward as far as the canal called the *Naviglio*: at the sides were hedges or walls of gardens, churches, convents, and a few private dwellings; and at the end of this street, in the middle of that which ran along the brink of the canal, was erected a cross, called the Cross of Sant’ Eusebio. And, let Renzo look before him as he would, nothing but this cross ever met his view. Arrived



at the cross road, which divided the street about half way, and looking to the right and left, he perceived in the right hand one, which bore the name of Santa Teresa, a citizen who was coming exactly towards him.—A Christian, at last!—said he to himself, and he immediately turned into the street, with the intention of making some inquiries of him. The man stared at and eyed the stranger who was advancing towards him, with a suspicious kind of look, even at a distance; and still more, when he perceived, that, instead of going about his own business, he was making up to him. Renzo, when he was within a little distance, took off his hat, like a respectful mountaineer, such as he was; and holding it in his left hand, put the whole fist of his right into the empty crown, and advanced more directly towards the unknown passenger. But he, wildly rolling his eyes, gave back a step, uplifted a knotty stick he carried, with a sharp spike at the end like a rapier, and pointing it at Renzo's breast, cried, "Stand off! stand off!"

"Oho!" cried the youth, in his turn, putting on his hat again; and willing to do anything, as he afterwards said in relating the matter, rather than pick a quarrel at that moment, he turned his back upon the uncourteous citizen, and pursued his way, or, to speak more correctly, that in which he happened to have set off.

The citizen also continued *his* route, trembling from head to foot, and every now and then looking behind him. And having reached home, he related how a poisoner had come up to him, with a meek and humble air, but with the look of an infamous impostor, and with a box of ointment or a paper of powder (he was not exactly certain which) in his hand in the crown of his hat, with the intention of playing a trick upon him, if he hadn't known how to keep him at a distance. "If he had come one step nearer," added he, "I'd have run



him through before he'd had time to touch me, the scoundrel! The misfortune was that we were in so unfrequented a place; had it been in the heart of Milan, I'd have called people, and bid them seize him. I'm sure we should have found that infamous poison in his hat. But there, all alone, I was obliged to be content with saving myself, without running the risk of getting the infection; for a little powder is soon thrown, and these people are remarkably dexterous: besides, they have the devil on their side. He'll be about Milan now: who knows what murders he is committing!" And as long as he lived, which was many years, every time that poisoners were talked of, he repeated his own instance, and added: "They who still maintain that it wasn't true, don't let them talk to me: for absolute facts one couldn't help seeing."

Renzo, far from imagining what a stab he had escaped, and more moved with anger than fear, reflected, in walking, on this reception, and pretty nearly guessed the opinion which the citizen had formed of his actions; yet the thing seemed to him so beyond all reason, that he came to the conclusion that the man must have been half a fool.—It's a bad beginning,—thought he, however;—it seems as if there were an evil star for me at this Milan. Everything seconds me readily enough in entering; but afterwards, when I am in, I find disagreeabilities all prepared for me. Well . . . with God's help . . . if I find . . . if I succeed in finding . . . Oh! all will have been nothing!—

Having reached the foot of the bridge, he turned without hesitation to the left, along a road called San Marco's Street, as it seemed to him this must lead into the heart of the city. As he went along, he kept constantly on the look-out, in hopes of discovering some human creature; but he could see none, except a disfigured corpse in the little ditch which runs between the few houses



(which were then still fewer) and the street, for a part of the way. Having passed this part, he heard some cries, which seemed to be addressed to him; and turning his eyes upwards in the direction whence the sound came, he perceived, at a little distance, on the balcony of an isolated dwelling, a poor woman, with a group of children around her, who, calling to him, was beckoning also with her hand to entreat him to approach. He ran towards her; and when he came near, "O young man," said the woman, "in the name of the friends you've lost, have the charity to go and tell the commissary that we are here forgotten! They've shut us up in the house as suspected persons, because my poor husband is dead; they've nailed up the door, as you see; and since yesterday morning nobody has brought us anything to eat: for the many hours I've stood here, I haven't been able to find a single Christian who would do me this kindness: and these poor little innocents are dying of hunger!"

"Of hunger!" exclaimed Renzo; and putting his hands into his pocket, "See here!" said he, drawing out the two loaves: "send something down to take them."

"God reward you for it! wait a moment," said the woman; and she went to fetch a little basket, and a cord by which to lower it for the bread. Renzo at this moment recollected the two loaves he had found near the Cross on his first entrance into Milan, and thought to himself:—See! it's a restitution, and perhaps better than if I'd found the real owner; for this surely is a deed of charity!—

"As to the commissary you mention, my good woman," said he, putting the bread into the basket, "I'm afraid I can't serve you at all; for, to tell you the truth, I'm a stranger, and have no acquaintance with any one in this country. However, if I meet any one at all civil and human to speak to, I'll tell him."



The woman begged he would do so, and told him the name of the street, by which he might describe the situation.

"You, too, I think," resumed Renzo, "can do me a service, a real kindness, without any trouble. A family of high rank, very great signors here in Milan, the family of \* \* \* \*; can you tell me where they live?"

"I know very well there is such a family," replied the woman: "but where it is I haven't the least idea. If you go forward into the city, in this direction, you'll find somebody who will show you the way. And don't forget to tell him about us!"

"Don't fear it," said Renzo; and he pursued his way.

At every step he heard increasing, and drawing nearer, a noise which he had already begun to distinguish as he stood talking with the woman: a noise of wheels and horses, with a tinkling of little bells, and every now and then a cracking of whips, and loud vociferations. He looked before him, but saw nothing. Having reached the end of this winding street, and got a view of the square of San Marco, the objects which first met his eye were two erect beams, with a rope and sundry pulleys, which he failed not immediately to recognise (for it was a familiar spectacle in those days) as the abominable instrument of torture. It was erected in that place, (and not only there, but in all the squares and most spacious streets,) in order that the deputies of every quarter, furnished with this most arbitrary of all means, might be able to apply it immediately to any one whom they should deem deserving of punishment, whether it were sequestered persons who left their houses, or officers rebelling against orders, and whatever else it might be: it was one of those extravagant and inefficacious remedies, of which, in those days, and at that particular period especially, they were so extremely prodigal.

While Renzo was contemplating this machine, won-



dering why it was erected in that place, and listening to the closely-approaching sound, behold, he saw appearing from behind the corner of the church a man ringing a little bell: it was an *apparitore*; and behind him two horses, which, stretching their necks and pawing with their hoofs, could with difficulty make their way; and drawn by these a cart full of dead bodies, and after that another, and then another, and another; and on each hand *monatti* walking by the side of the horses, hastening them on with whips, blows, and curses. These corpses were for the most part naked, while some were miserably enveloped in tattered sheets, and were heaped up and twined together, almost like a nest of snakes slowly unfolding themselves to the warmth of a mild spring day; so that at every trifling obstacle, at every jolt, these fatal groups were seen quivering and falling into horrible confusion, heads dangling down, women's long tresses dishevelled, arms torn off and striking against the wheels, exhibiting to the already horror-stricken view how such a spectacle may become still more wretched and disgraceful.

The youth had paused at the corner of the square, by the side of the railing of the canal, and was praying, meanwhile, for these unknown dead. A horrible thought flashed across his mind:—Perhaps there, amongst these, beneath them! . . . . Oh Lord! let it not be true! help me not to think of it!—

The funeral procession having disappeared, he moved on, crossing the square, and taking the street along the left-hand side of the canal, without other reason for his choice than because the procession had taken the opposite direction. After going a few steps between the side of the church and the canal, he saw to the right the bridge Marcellino; he crossed it, and by that oblique passage arrived in the street of the Borgo Nuovo. Casting his eyes forward, on the constant look-out for



some one of whom he might ask direction, he saw at the other end of the street a priest clothed in a doublet, with a small stick in his hand, standing near a half-open door, with his head bent, and his ear at the aperture; and very soon afterwards he saw him raise his hand to pronounce a blessing. He guessed,—what in fact was the case,—that he had just finished confessing some one; and said to himself:—This is my man. If a priest, in the exercise of his functions, hasn't a little charity, a little good-nature and kindness, I can only say there is none left in the world.—

In the meanwhile the priest, leaving the door-way, advanced towards Renzo, walking with much caution in the middle of the road. When he was within four or five paces of him, Renzo took off his hat and signified that he wanted to speak to him, stopping, at the same time, so as to let him understand that he would not approach too indiscreetly. The priest also paused, with the air of one prepared to listen, planting his stick, however, on the ground before him, to serve, as it were, for a kind of bulwark. Renzo proposed his inquiries, which the good priest readily satisfied, not only telling him the name of the street where the house was situated, but giving him also, as he saw the poor fellow had need of it, a little direction as to his way; pointing out to him, *i. e.* by the help of right and left hands, crosses and churches, those other six or eight streets he had yet to traverse before reaching the one he was inquiring after.

“God keep you in good health, both in these days and always!” said Renzo: and as the priest prepared to go away, “Another favour,” added he; and he told him of the poor forgotten woman. The worthy priest thanked him for having given him this opportunity of conveying assistance where it was so much needed; and saying that he would go and inform the proper authorities, took his departure.



Renzo, making a bow, also pursued his way, and tried, as he went along, to recapitulate the instructions he had received, that he might be obliged as seldom as possible to ask further directions. But it cannot be imagined how difficult he found the task; not so much on account of the perplexity of the thing, as from a fresh uneasiness which had arisen in his mind. That name of the street, that tracing of the road, had almost upset him. It was the information he had desired and requested, without which he could do nothing; nor had anything been said to him, together with it, which could suggest a presage, not to say a suspicion, of misfortune. Yet how was it? The rather more distinct idea of an approaching termination to his doubts, when he might hear either, "She is living;" or, on the other hand, "She is dead"—that idea had come before him with so much force, that at that moment he would rather have been in ignorance about everything, and have been at the beginning of that journey, of which he now found himself so near the end. He gathered up his courage, however:—Ah!—said he to himself,—if we begin now to play the child, how will things go on?—Thus re-emboldened as best might be, he pursued his way, advancing further into the city.

What a city! and who found time in those days to recollect what it had been the year before, by reason of the famine!

Renzo happened to have to pass through one of its most unsightly and desolated quarters; that junction of streets known by the name of the *Carrobio* of the Porta Nuova. (Here, at that time, was a cross at the head of the street, and opposite to it, by the side of the present site of San Francesco di Paola, an ancient church, bearing the name of Santa Anastasia.) Such had been the virulence of the contagion, and the infection of the scattered corpses in this neighbourhood, that the few



survivors had been obliged to remove; so that while the passer-by was stunned with such a spectacle of solitude and desertion, more than one sense was only too grievously incommoded and offended by the tokens and relics of recent habitation. Renzo quickened his steps, consoling himself with the thought that the end of his search could not yet be at hand, and hoping that before he arrived at it, he would find the scene, at least in part, changed; and, in fact, a little further on, he came out into a part which might still be called the city of the living—but what a city, and what living! All the doorways into the streets kept shut from either suspicion or alarm, except those which were left open because deserted or invaded; others nailed up and sealed outside, on account of the sick, or dead, who lay within; others marked with a cross drawn with coal, as an intimation to the *monatti* that there were dead to be carried away: all more a matter of chance than otherwise, according as there happened to be here, rather than there, a commissary of health, or other officer, who was inclined either to execute the regulations, or to exercise violence and oppression. Everywhere were rags and corrupted bandages, infected straw, or clothes; or sheets, thrown from the windows; sometimes bodies, which had suddenly fallen dead in the streets, and were left there till a cart happened to pass by and pick them up, or shaken from off the carts themselves, or even thrown from the windows. To such a degree had the obstinacy and virulence of the contagion brutalized men's minds, and divested them of all compassionate care, of every feeling of social respect! The stir of business, the clatter of carriages, the cries of sellers, the talking of passengers, all were everywhere hushed; and seldom was the death-like stillness broken but by the rumbling of funeral cars, the lamentations of beggars, the groans of the sick, the shouts of the frantic, or the vociferations



of the *monatti*. At daybreak, midday, and evening, one of the bells of the cathedral gave the signal for reciting certain prayers proposed by the Archbishop; its tones were responded to by the bells of the other churches; and then persons might be seen repairing to the windows to pray in common; and a murmur of sighs and voices might be heard which inspired sadness, mingled at the same time with some feeling of comfort.

Two thirds, perhaps, of the inhabitants being by this time carried off, a great part of the remainder having departed, or lying languishing at home, and the concourse from without being reduced almost to nothing, perhaps not one individual among the few who still went about, would be met with in a long circuit, in whom something strange and sufficient in itself to infer a fatal change in circumstances, was not apparent. Men of the highest rank might be seen without cape or cloak, at that time a most essential part of any gentleman's dress; priests without cassocks, friars without cowls; in short, all kinds of dress were dispensed with which could contract anything in fluttering about, or give (which was more feared than all the rest) facilities to the poisoners. And besides this carefulness to go about as trussed up and confined as possible, their persons were neglected and disorderly; the beards of such as were accustomed to wear them grown much longer, and suffered to grow by those who had formerly kept them shaven; their hair, too, long and undressed, not only from the neglect which usually attends prolonged depression, but because suspicion had been attached to barbers ever since one of them, Giangiacomo Mora, had been taken and condemned as a famous poisoner; a name which, for a long while afterwards, preserved throughout the duchy a pre-eminent celebrity in infamy, and deserved a far more extensive and lasting one in commiseration. The greater number carried in one hand a

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stick, some even a pistol, as a threatening warning to any one who should attempt to approach them stealthily; and in the other, perfumed pastils, or little balls of metal or wood, perforated and filled with sponges steeped in aromatic vinegar, which they applied from time to time, as they went along, to their noses, or held there continually. Some carried a small vial hung round their neck, containing a little quicksilver, persuaded that this possessed the virtue of absorbing and arresting every pestilential effluvia; this they were very careful to renew from time to time. Gentlemen not only traversed the streets without their usual attendants, but even went about with a basket on their arms, providing the common necessities of life. Even friends, when they met in the streets alive, saluted each other at a distance, with silent and hasty signs. Every one, as he walked along, had enough to do to avoid the filthy and deadly stumbling-blocks with which the ground was strewn, and in some places even encumbered. Every one tried to keep the middle of the road, for fear of some other obstacle, some other more fatal weight, which might fall from the windows; for fear of venomous powders, which it was affirmed were often thrown down thence upon the passengers; for fear, too, of the walls, which might, perchance, be anointed. Thus ignorance, unseasonably secure, or preposterously circumspect, now added trouble to trouble, and incited false terrors in compensation for the reasonable and salutary ones which it had withstood at the beginning.

Such are the less disfigured and pitiable spectacles which were everywhere present; the sight of the whole, the wealthy: for after so many pictures of misery, and remembering that still more painful one which it remains for us to describe, we will not now stop to tell what was the condition of the sick who dragged themselves along, or lay in the streets—beggars, women, children. It was such that the spectator could find a desperate consola-



tion, as it were, in what appears at first sight, to those who are far removed in place and time, the climax of misery; the thought, I mean,—the constant observation, that the survivors were reduced to so small a number.

Renzo had already gone some distance on his way through the midst of this desolation, when he heard, proceeding from a street a few yards off, into which he had been directed to turn, a confused noise, in which he readily distinguished the usual horrible tinkling.

At the entrance of the street, which was one of the most spacious, he perceived four carts standing in the middle; and as in a corn-market there is a constant hurrying to and fro of people, and an emptying and filling of sacks, such was the bustle here; *monatti* intruding into houses, *monatti* coming out, bearing a burden upon their shoulders, which they placed upon one or other of the carts; some in red livery, others without that distinction: many with another still more odious, plumes and cloaks of various colours, which these miserable wretches wore in the midst of the general mourning, as if in honour of a festival. From time to time the mournful cry resounded from one of the windows: "Here, *monatti*!" And, with a still more wretched sound, a harsh voice rose from this horrible source in reply: "Coming directly!" Or else there were lamentations nearer at hand, or entreaties to make haste; to which the *monatti* responded with oaths.

Having entered the street, Renzo quickened his steps, trying not to look at these obstacles further than was necessary to avoid them; his attention, however, was arrested by a remarkable object of pity, such pity as inclines to the contemplation of its object; so that he came to a pause almost without determining to do so.

Coming down the steps of one of the door-ways, and advancing towards the convoy, he beheld a woman, whose appearance announced still-remaining, though somewhat



advanced youthfulness; a veiled and dimmed, but not destroyed beauty, was still apparent, in spite of much suffering, and a fatal languor—that delicate, and, at the same time, majestic beauty, which is conspicuous in the Lombard blood. Her gait was weary, but not tottering; no tears fell from her eyes, though they bore tokens of having shed many; there was something peaceful and profound in her sorrow, which indicated a mind fully conscious and sensitive enough to feel it. But it was not only her own appearance which, in the midst of so much misery, marked her out so especially as an object of commiseration, and revived in her behalf a feeling now exhausted—extinguished, in men's hearts. She carried in her arms a little child, about nine years old, now a lifeless body; but laid out and arranged, with her hair parted on her forehead, and in a white and remarkably clean dress, as if those hands had decked her out for a long promised feast, granted as a reward. Nor was she lying there, but upheld and adjusted on one arm, with her breast reclining against her mother's, like a living creature; save that a delicate little hand, as white as wax, hung from one side with a kind of inanimate weight, and the head rested upon her mother's shoulder with an abandonment deeper than that of sleep: her mother; for, even if their likeness to each other had not given assurance of the fact, the countenance which still depicted any feeling would have clearly revealed it.

A horrible-looking *monatto* approached the woman, and attempted to take the burden from her arms, with a kind of unusual respect, however, and with involuntary hesitation. But she, slightly drawing back, yet with the air of one who shows neither scorn nor displeasure, said, "No! don't take her from me yet; I must place her myself on this cart: here." So saying, she opened her hand, displayed a purse which she held in



it, and dropped it into that which the *monatto* extended towards her. She then continued: "Promise me not to take a thread from around her, nor to let any one else attempt to do so, and to lay her in the ground thus."

The *monatto* laid his right hand on his heart; and then zealously, and almost obsequiously, rather from the new feeling by which he was, as it were, subdued, than on account of the unlooked-for reward, hastened to make a little room on the car for the infant dead. The lady, giving it a kiss on the forehead, laid it on the spot prepared for it, as upon a bed, arranged it there, covering it with a pure white linen cloth, and pronounced the parting words: "Farewell, Cecilia! rest in peace! This evening we, too, will join you, to rest together for ever. In the meanwhile, pray for us; for I will pray for you and the others." Then, turning again to the *monatto*, "You," said she, "when you pass this way in the evening, may come to fetch me too, and not me only."

So saying, she re-entered the house, and, after an instant, appeared at the window, holding in her arms another more dearly-loved one, still living, but with the marks of death on its countenance. She remained to contemplate these so unworthy obsequies of the first child, from the time the car started until it was out of sight, and then disappeared. And what remained for her to do, but to lay upon the bed the only one that was left her, and to stretch herself beside it, that they might die together? as the flower already full blown upon the stem, falls together with the bud still enfolded in its calyx, under the scythe which levels alike all the herbage of the field.

"O Lord!" exclaimed Renzo, "hear her! take her to Thyself, her and that little infant one; they have suffered enough! surely, they have suffered enough!"

Recovered from these singular emotions, and while



trying to recall to memory the directions he had received, to ascertain whether he was to turn at the first street, and whether to the right or left, he heard another and a different sound proceeding from the latter, a confused sound of imperious cries, feeble lamentations, prolonged groans, sobs of women, and children's moans.

He went forward, oppressed at heart by that one sad and gloomy foreboding. Having reached the spot where the two streets crossed, he beheld a confused multitude advancing from one side, and stood still to wait till it had passed. It was a party of sick on their way to the *Lazzeretto*; some driven thither by force, vainly offering resistance, vainly crying that they would rather die upon their beds, and replying with impotent imprecations to the oaths and commands of the *monatti* who were conducting them; others who walked on in silence, without any apparent grief and without hope, like insensible beings; women with infants clinging to their bosoms; children, terrified by the cries, the mandates, and the crowd, more than by the confused idea of death, with loud cries demanding their mother and her trusted embrace, and imploring that they might remain at their well-known homes. Alas! perhaps their mother, whom they supposed they had left asleep upon her bed, had there thrown herself down senseless, subdued in a moment by the disease, to be carried away on a cart to the *Lazzeretto*,—or the grave, if perchance the car should arrive a little later. Perhaps—oh misfortune deserving of still more bitter tears—the mother, entirely taken up by her own sufferings, had forgotten everything, even her own children, and had no longer any wish but to die in quiet.

In such a scene of confusion, however, some examples of constancy and piety might still be seen: parents, brothers, sons, husbands, supporting their loved ones, and accompanying them with words of comfort; and



not adults only, but even boys and little girls escorting their younger brothers and sisters, and, with manly sense and compassion, exhorting them to obedience, and assuring them that they were going to a place where others would take care of them and try to restore them to health.

In the midst of the sadness and emotions of tenderness excited by these spectacles, a far different solicitude pressed more closely upon our traveller, and held him in painful suspense. The house must be near at hand, and who knew whether among these people. . . . But the crowd having all passed by, and this doubt being removed, he turned to a *monatto* who was walking behind, and asked him for the street and dwelling of Don Ferrante. "It's gone to smash, clown," was the reply he received. Renzo cared not to answer again; but perceiving, a few yards distant, a commissary who brought up the convoy, and had a little more Christian-like countenance, he repeated to him the same inquiry. The commissary, pointing with a stick in the direction whence he had come, said, "The first street to the right, the last gentleman's house on the left."

With new and still deeper anxiety of mind, the youth bent his steps thitherward, and quickly distinguished the house among others more humble and unpretending; he approached the closed door, placed his hand on the knocker, and held it there in suspense, as in an urn, before drawing out the ticket upon which depends life or death. At length he raised the hammer, and gave a resolute knock.

In a moment or two a window was slightly opened, and a woman appeared at it to peep out, looking towards the door with a suspicious countenance, which seemed to say,—*Monatti*? robbers? commissaries? poisoners? devils?—

"Signora," said Renzo, looking upwards, in a some-



what tremulous tone, "is there a young country girl here at service, of the name of Lucia?"

"She's here no longer; go away," answered the woman, preparing to shut the window.

"One moment, for pity's sake! She's no longer here? Where is she?"

"At the Lazzeretto;" and she was again about to close the window.

"But one moment, for Heaven's sake! With the pestilence?"

"To be sure. Something new, eh? Get you gone."

"Oh stay! Was she very ill? How long is it? . . ."

But this time the window was closed in reality.

"Oh Signora! Signora! one word, for charity! for the sake of your poor dead! I don't ask you for anything of yours: alas! oh!" But he might as well have talked to the wall.

Afflicted by this intelligence, and vexed with the treatment he had received, Renzo again seized the knocker, and standing close to the door, kept squeezing and twisting it in his hand, then lifted it to knock again, in a kind of despair, and paused, in act to strike. In this agitation of feeling, he turned to see if his eye could catch any person near at hand, from whom he might, perhaps, receive some more sober information, some direction, some light. But the first, the only person he discovered was another woman, distant, perhaps, about twenty yards; who, with a look full of terror, hatred, impatience, and malice, with a certain wild expression of eye which betrayed an attempt to look at him and something else at a distance at the same time, with a mouth opened as if on the point of shouting as loud as she could; but holding even her breath, raising two thin, bony arms, and extending and drawing back two wrinkled and clenched hands, as if reaching to herself something, gave evident signs of wishing to



call people without letting somebody perceive it. On their eyes encountering each other, she, looking still more hideous, started like one taken by surprise.

"What the ——?" began Renzo, raising his fist towards the woman; but she, having lost all hope of being able to have him unexpectedly seized, gave utterance to the cry she had hitherto restrained: "The poisoner! seize him! seize him! seize him! the poisoner!"

"Who? I! ah you lying old witch! hold your tongue there!" cried Renzo; and he sprang towards her to frighten her and make her be silent. He perceived, however, at this moment, that he must rather look after himself. At the screams of the woman people flocked from both sides; not the crowds, indeed, which, in a similar case, would have collected three months before; but still more than enough to crush a single individual. At this very instant, the window was again thrown open, and the same woman who had shown herself so uncourteous just before, displayed herself this time in full, and cried out, "Take him, take him; for he must be one of those wicked wretches who go about to anoint the doors of gentlefolks."

Renzo determined in an instant that it would be a better course to make his escape from them, than stay to clear himself; he cast an eye on each side to see where were the fewest people; and in that direction took to his legs. He repulsed, with a tremendous push, one who attempted to stop his passage; with another blow on the chest he forced a second to retreat eight or ten yards, who was running to meet him; and away he went at full speed, with his tightly-clenched fist uplifted in the air, in preparation for whomsoever should come in his way. The street was clear before him; but behind his back he heard resounding more and more loudly the savage cry: "Seize him! seize him! a poisoner!" he heard, drawing nearer and nearer, the



footsteps of the swiftest among his pursuers. His anger became fury, his anguish was changed into desperation; a cloud seemed gathering over his eyes; he seized hold of his poniard, unsheathed it, stopped, drew himself up, turned round a more fierce and savage face than he had ever before put on in his whole life; and, brandishing in the air, with outstretched arm, the glittering blade, exclaimed, "Let him who dares come forward, you rascals! and I'll anoint him with this, in earnest."

But, with astonishment and a confused feeling of relief, he perceived that his persecutors had already stopped at some distance, as if in hesitation, and that while they continued shouting after him, they were beckoning with uplifted hands, like people possessed and terrified out of their senses, to others at some distance beyond him. He again turned round, and beheld before him, and a very little way off, (for his extreme perturbation had prevented his observing it a moment before,) a cart advancing, indeed a file of the usual funeral carts, with their usual accompaniments; and beyond them another small band of people, who were ready, on their part, to fall upon the poisoner, and take him in the midst; these, however, were also restrained by the same impediment. Finding himself thus between two fires, it occurred to him that what was to them a cause of terror might be for himself a means of safety; he thought that this was not a time for squeamish scruples; so again sheathing his poniard, he drew a little on one side, resumed his way towards the carts, and passing by the first, remarked in the second a tolerably empty space. He took aim, sprang up, and lit with his right foot in the cart, his left in the air, and his arms stretched forward.

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed the *monatti* with one voice, some of whom were following the convoy on foot, others were seated on the carts; and others, to tell the horrible fact as it really was, on the dead bodies, quaff-



ing from a large flask which was going the round of the party. "Bravo! a capital hit!"

"You've come to put yourself under the protection of the *monatti*: you may reckon yourself as safe as in church," said one of the two who were seated on the cart upon which he had thrown himself.

The greater part of his enemies had, on the approach of the train, turned their backs upon him and fled, crying, at the same time, "Seize him! seize him! a poisoner!" Some few of them, however, retired more deliberately, stopping every now and then, and turning with a hideous grin of rage and threatening gestures towards Renzo; who replied to them from the cart by shaking his fist at them.

"Leave it to me," said a *monatto*; and tearing a filthy rag from one of the bodies, he hastily tied it in a knot, and taking it by one of its ears, raised it like a sling towards these obstinate fellows, and pretended to hurl it at them, crying, "Here, you rascals!" At this action they all fled in horror; and Renzo saw nothing but the backs of his enemies, and heels which bounded rapidly through the air, like the hammers in a clothier's mill.

A howl of triumph arose among the *monatti*, a stormy burst of laughter, a prolonged "Eh!" as an accompaniment, so to say, to this fugue.

"Aha! look if we don't know how to protect honest fellows!" said the same *monatto* to Renzo: "one of us is worth more than a hundred of those cowards!"

"Certainly, I may say I owe you my life," replied he; "and I thank you with all my heart."

"Not a word, not a word," answered the *monatto*: "you deserve it: one can see you're a brave young fellow. You do right to poison these rascals: anoint away, extirpate all those who are good for nothing, except when they're dead; for in reward for the life we lead, they only curse us, and keep saying that when the



pestilence is over, they'll have us all hanged. They must be finished before the pestilence; the *monatti* only must be left to chant victory and revel in Milan."

"Long live the pestilence, and death to the rabble!" exclaimed the other; and with this beautiful toast he put the flask to his mouth, and holding it with both his hands, amidst the joltings of the cart, took a long draught, and then handed it to Renzo, saying, "Drink to our health."

"I wish it you all, with my whole heart," said Renzo; "but I'm not thirsty: I don't feel any inclination to drink, just now."

"You've had a fine fright, it seems," said the *monatto*. "You look like a harmless creature enough; you should have another face than that to be a poisoner."

"Let everybody do as he can," said the other.

"Here, give it me," said one of those on foot at the side of the car, "for I, too, want to drink another cup to the health of his honour, who finds himself in such capital company . . . there, there, just there, among that elegant carriage-full."

And with one of his hideous and cursed grins he pointed to the cart in front of that upon which our poor Renzo was seated. Then, composing his face to an expression of seriousness still more wicked and revolting, he made a bow in that direction, and resumed: "May it please you, my lord, to let a poor wretch of a *monatto* taste a little of this wine from your cellar? Mind you, sir: our way of life is only so so: we have taken you into our carriage to give you a ride into the country; and then it takes very little wine to do harm to your lordships: the poor *monatti* have good stomachs."

And amidst the loud laughs of his companions, he took the flask, and lifted it up, but, before drinking, turned to Renzo, fixed his eyes on his face, and said to him, with a certain air of scornful compassion: "The



devil, with whom you have made agreement, must be very young; for if we hadn't been by to rescue you, he'd have given you mighty assistance." And amidst a fresh burst of laughter, he applied the flagon to his lips.

"Give us some! What! give us some!" shouted many voices from the preceding car. The ruffian, having swallowed as much as he wished, handed the great flask with both hands into those of his fellow-ruffians, who continued passing it round, until one of them, having emptied it, grasped it by the neck, slung it round in the air two or three times, and dashed it to atoms upon the pavement, crying, "Long live the pestilence!" He then broke into one of their licentious ballads, and was soon accompanied by all the rest of this depraved chorus. The infernal song, mingled with the tinkling of the bells, the rattle of the carts, and the trampling of men and horses, resounded through the silent vacuity of the streets, and echoing in the houses, bitterly wrung the hearts of the few who still inhabited them.

But what cannot sometimes turn to advantage? What cannot appear good in some case or another? The extremity of a moment before had rendered more than tolerable to Renzo the company of these dead and living companions; and now the sounds that relieved him from the awkwardness of such a conversation, were, I had almost said, acceptable, music to his ears. Still half bewildered, and in great agitation, he thanked Providence in his heart, as he best could, that he had escaped such imminent danger without receiving or inflicting injury; he prayed for assistance to deliver himself now from his deliverers; and for his part kept on the look-out, watching his companions, and reconnoitering the road, that he might seize the proper moment to slide quietly down, without giving them an opportunity of making any disturbance or uproar, which might stir up mischief in the passers-by.



And lo! on turning a corner, he seemed to recognise the place along which they were about to pass: he looked more attentively, and at once knew it by more certain signs. Does the reader know where he was? In the direct course to the Porta Orientale, in that very street along which he had gone so slowly, and returned so speedily, about twenty months before. He quickly remembered that from thence he could go straight to the Lazzeretto; and this finding of himself in the right way without any endeavour of his own, and without direction, he looked upon as a special token of Divine guidance, and a good omen of what remained. At that moment a commissary came to meet the cars, who called out to the *monatti* to stop, and I know not what besides: it need only be said that they came to a halt, and the music was changed into clamorous dialogues. One of the *monatti* seated on Renzo's car jumped down: Renzo said to the other, "Thank you for your kindness; God reward you for it!" and sprang down at the opposite side.

"Get you gone, poor poisoner," replied the man: "you'll not be the fellow that'll ruin Milan!"

Fortunately there was no one at hand who could overhear him. The party had stopped on the left hand of the street: Renzo hastily crossed over to the opposite side; and, keeping close to the wall, trudged onward towards the bridge; crossed it; followed the well-known street of the Borgo, and recognised the Convent of the Capuchins; he comes close to the gate, sees the projecting corner of the Lazzeretto, passes through the palisade, and the scene outside the enclosure is laid open to his view: not so much an indication and specimen of the interior, as itself a vast, diversified, and indescribable scene.

Along the two sides which are visible to a spectator from this point, all was bustle and confusion; there was a great concourse; an influx and reflux of people; sick



flocking in crowds to the Lazzeretto; some sitting or lying on the edge of one or other of the moats that flanked the road, whose strength had proved insufficient to carry them within their place of retreat, or, when they had abandoned it in despair, had equally failed to convey them further away. Others were wandering about as if stupified; and not a few were absolutely beside themselves: one would be eagerly relating his fancies to a miserable creature labouring under the malady; another would be actually raving; while a third appeared with a smiling countenance, as if assisting at some gay spectacle. But the strangest and most clamorous kind of so melancholy a gaiety, was a loud and continual singing, which seemed to proceed from that wretched assembly, and even drowned all the other voices—a popular song of love, joyous and playful, one of those which are called rural; and following this sound by the eye to discover who could possibly be so cheerful, yonder, tranquilly seated in the bottom of the ditch that washes the walls of the Lazzeretto, he perceived a poor wretch, with upturned eyes, singing at the very stretch of his voice!

Renzo had scarcely gone a few yards along the south side of the edifice, when an extraordinary noise arose in the crowd, and a distant cry of “Take care!” and “Stop him!” He stood upon tiptoe, looked forward, and beheld a jaded horse galloping at full speed, impelled forward by a still more wretched looking rider: a poor frantic creature, who, seeing the beast loose and unguarded, standing by a cart, had hastily mounted his bare back, and striking him on the neck with his fists, and spurring him with his heels, was urging him impetuously onward; *monatti* were following, shouting and howling; and all were enveloped in a cloud of dust, which whirled around their heads.

Confounded and weary with the sight of so much



misery, the youth arrived at the gate of that abode where perhaps more was concentrated than had been scattered over the whole space it had yet been his fortune to traverse. He walked up to the door, entered under the vaulted roof, and stood for a moment without moving in the middle of the portico.







## CHAPTER XXXV.

**L**ET the reader imagine the enclosure of the Lazzeretto peopled with sixteen thousand persons ill of the plague; the whole area encumbered, here with tents and cabins, there with carts, elsewhere with people; those two interminable ranges of portico to the right and left, covered, crowded, with dead or dying, stretched upon mattresses, or the bare straw; and throughout the whole of this, so to say, immense den, a commotion, a fluctuation, like the swell of the sea; and within, people coming and going, stopping and running, some sinking under disease, others rising from their sick beds, either convalescent, frantic, or to attend upon others. Such was the spectacle which suddenly burst upon Renzo's view, and forced him to pause there, horror-struck and overpowered. We do not intend to describe this spectacle by itself, for which, doubtless, none of our readers would thank us; we will only follow our youth in his painful

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walk, stop where he stopped, and relate what he happened to witness, so far as is necessary to explain what he did, and what chanced to occur to him.

From the gate where he stood, up to the temple in the middle, and from that again to the opposite gate, ran a kind of pathway, free from cabins, and every other substantial impediment; and, at a second glance, he observed a great bustle of removing carts, and making the way clear; and discovered officers and Capuchins directing this operation, and at the same time dismissing all those who had no business there. Fearing lest he also should be turned out in this manner, he slipped in between the pavilions, on the side to which he had casually turned—the right.

He went forward, according as he found room to set his foot down, from cabin to cabin, popping his head into each, casting his eye upon every one who lay outside, gazing upon countenances broken down by suffering, contracted by spasm, or motionless in death, perchance he might happen to find that one which, nevertheless, he dreaded to find. He had already, however, gone some considerable distance, and often and often repeated this melancholy inspection, without having yet seen a single woman; he concluded, therefore, that these must be lodged in a separate quarter. So far he guessed; but of the whereabouts he had no indication, nor could he form the least conjecture. From time to time he met attendants, as different in appearance, dress, and behaviour, as the motive was different and opposite which gave to both one and the other strength to live in the exercise of such offices: in the one, the extinction of all feelings of compassion; in the other, compassion more than human. But from neither did he attempt to ask directions, for fear of creating for himself new obstacles; and he resolved to walk on by himself till he succeeded in discovering women. And



as he walked along, he failed not to look narrowly around, though from time to time he was compelled to withdraw his eyes, overcome, and, as it were, dazzled by the spectacle of so great miseries. Yet, whither could he turn them, where suffer them to rest, save upon other miseries as great?

The very air and sky added, if any thing could add, to the horror of these sights. The fog had condensed by degrees, and resolved itself into large clouds, which, becoming darker and darker, made it seem like the tempestuous closing in of evening; except that towards the zenith of this deep and lowering sky, the sun's disk was visible as from behind a thick veil, pale, emitting around a very feeble light, which was speedily exhaled, and pouring down a death-like and oppressive heat. Every now and then, amidst the vast murmur that floated around, was heard a deep rumbling of thunder, interrupted, as it were, and irresolute; nor could the listener distinguish from which side it came. He might, indeed, easily have deemed it a distant sound of cars, unexpectedly coming to a stand. In the country round, not a twig bent under a breath of air, not a bird was seen to alight or fly away; the swallow alone, appearing suddenly from the eaves of the enclosure, skimmed along the ground with extended wing, sweeping, as it were, the surface of the field; but, alarmed at the surrounding confusion, rapidly mounted again into the air, and flew away. It was one of those days in which, among a party of travellers, not one of them breaks the silence; and the hunter walks pensively along, with his eyes bent to the ground; and the peasant, digging in the field, pauses in his song, without being aware of it; one of those days which are the forerunners of a tempest, in which nature, as if motionless without, while agitated by internal travail, seems to oppress every living thing, and to add an undefinable weight to every employment, to



idleness, to existence itself. But in that abode specially assigned to suffering and death, men hitherto struggling with their malady might be seen sinking under this new pressure; they were to be seen by hundreds rapidly becoming worse; and, at the same time, the last struggle was more distressing, and, in the augmentation of suffering, the groans were still more stifled; nor, perhaps, had there yet been in that place an hour of bitterness equal to this.

The youth had already threaded his way for some time without success through this maze of cabins, when, in the variety of lamentations and confused murmurs, he began to distinguish a singular intermixture of bleatings and infants' cries. He arrived at length before a cracked and disjointed wooden partition, from within which this extraordinary sound proceeded; and peeping through a large aperture between two boards, he beheld an enclosure scattered throughout with little huts, and in these, as well as in the spaces of the small camp between the cabins, not the usual occupants of an infirmary, but infants, lying upon little beds, pillows, sheets, or cloths spread upon the ground, and nurses and other women busily attending upon them; and, which above every thing else attracted and engrossed his attention, she-goats mingled with these, and acting as their coadjutrices: a hospital of innocents, such as the place and times could afford them. It was, I say, a novel sight, to behold some of these animals standing quietly over this or that infant, giving it suck, and another hastening at the cry of a child, as if endued with maternal feeling, and stopping by the side of the little claimant, and contriving to dispose itself over the infant, and bleating, and fidgeting, almost as if demanding some one to come to the assistance of both.

Here and there nurses were seated with infants at the breast; some employing such expressions of affection



as raised a doubt in the mind of the spectator whether they had been induced to repair thither by the promises of reward, or by that voluntary benevolence which goes in search of the needy and afflicted. One of these, with deep sorrow depicted in her countenance, drew from her breast a poor weeping little creature, and mournfully went to look for an animal which might be able to supply her place; another regarded with a compassionate look the little one asleep on her bosom, and gently kissing it, went to lay it on a bed in one of the cabins; while a third, surrendering her breast to the stranger suckling, with an air not of negligence, but of pre-occupation, gazed fixedly up to heaven. What was she thinking of, with that gesture, with that look, but of one brought forth from her own bowels, who, perhaps only a short time before, had been nourished at that breast, perchance had expired on that bosom!

Other women, of more experience, supplied different offices. One would run at the cry of a famished child, lift it from the ground, and carry it to a goat, feeding upon a heap of fresh herbage; and applying it to the creature's paps, would chide, and, at the same time, coax the inexperienced animal with her voice, that it might quietly lend itself to its new office; another would spring forward to drive off a goat which was trampling under foot a poor babe, in its eagerness to suckle another; while a third was carrying about her own infant, and rocking it in her arms, now trying to lull it to sleep by singing, now to pacify it with soothing words, and calling it by a name she had herself given it. At this moment a Capuchin, with a very white beard, arrived, bringing two screaming infants, one in each arm, which he had just taken from their dying mothers; and a woman ran to receive them, and went to seek among the crowd, and in the flocks, some one that would immediately supply the place of a mother.



More than once, the youth, urged by his anxiety, had torn himself from the opening to resume his way ; and, after all, had again peeped in to watch another moment or two.

Having at length left the place, he went on close along the partition, until a group of huts, which were propped against it, compelled him to turn aside. He then went round the cabins, with the intention of regaining the partition, turning the corner of the enclosure, and making some fresh discoveries. But while he was looking forward to reconnoitre his way, a sudden, transient, instantaneous apparition, struck his eye, and put him in great agitation. He saw, about a hundred yards off, a Capuchin threading his way and quickly becoming lost among the pavilions : a Capuchin, who, even thus passingly, and at a distance, had all the bearing, motions, and figure of Father Cristoforo. With the frantic eagerness the reader can imagine, he sprang forward in that direction, looking here and there, winding about, backward, forward, inside and out, by circles, and through narrow passages, until he again saw, with increased joy, the form of the self-same friar ; he saw him at a little distance, just leaving a large boiling pot, and going with a porringer in his hand towards a cabin ; then he beheld him seat himself in the doorway, make the sign of the cross on the basin he held before him, and, looking around him, like one constantly on the alert, begin to eat. It was, indeed, Father Cristoforo.

The history of the friar, from the point at which we lost sight of him up to the present meeting, may be told in a few words. He had never removed from Rimini, nor even thought of removing, until the plague, breaking out in Milan, afforded him the opportunity he had long so earnestly desired, of sacrificing his life for his fellow-creatures. He urgently entreated that he might be recalled from Rimini to assist and attend upon the



infected patients. The Count, Attilio's uncle, was dead; and besides, the times required tenders of the sick rather than politicians; so that his request was granted without difficulty. He came immediately to Milan, entered the Lazzaretto, and had now been there about three months.

But the consolation Renzo felt in thus again seeing his good friar was not for a moment unalloyed; together with the certainty that it was he, he was also made painfully aware of how much he was changed. His stooping, and, as it were, laborious carriage, his wan and shrivelled face, all betokened an exhausted nature, a broken and sinking frame, which was assisted and, as it were, upheld from hour to hour only by the energy of his mind.

He kept his eye fixed on the youth who was approaching him, and who was seeking by gestures, (not daring to do so with his voice,) to make him distinguish and recognise him. "Oh, Father Cristoforo!" said he, at last, when he was near enough to be heard without shouting.

"You here!" said the friar, setting the porringer on the ground, and rising from his seat.

"How are you, Father?—how are you?"

"Better than the many poor creatures you see," replied the friar; and his voice was feeble, hollow, and as changed as every thing else about him. His eye alone was what it always was, or had something about it even more bright and resplendent; as if Charity, elevated by the approaching end of her labours, and exulting in the consciousness of being near her source, restored to it a more ardent and purer fire than that which infirmity was every hour extinguishing. "But you," pursued he, "how is it you're in this place? What makes you come thus to brave the pestilence?"



"I've had it, thank Heaven! I come . . . . to seek for . . . . Lucia."

"Lucia! Is Lucia here?"

"She is; at least, I hope in God she may still be here."

"Is she your wife?"

"Oh, my dear father! My wife! no, that she's not. Don't you know anything of what has happened?"

"No, my son; since God removed me to a distance from you, I've never heard anything further; but now that He has sent you to me, I'll tell you the truth, that I wish very much to know. But . . . . and the sentence of outlawry?"

"You know, then, what things they've done to me?"

"But you, what had you done?"

"Listen: if I were to say that I was prudent that day in Milan, I should tell a lie; but I didn't do a single wicked action."

"I believe you; and I believed it too before."

"Now, then, I may tell you all."

"Wait," said the friar; and going a few yards out of the hut, he called, "Father Vittore!" In a moment or two, a young Capuchin appeared, to whom Cristoforo said, "Do me the kindness, Father Vittore, to take my share, too, of waiting upon our patients, while I am absent for a little while; and if any one should ask for me, will you be good enough to call me. That one, particularly; if ever he gives the least sign of returning consciousness, let me be informed of it directly, for charity's sake."

The young friar answered that he would do as he requested; and then Cristoforo, turning to Renzo, said, "Let us go in here. But . . . ." added he directly, stopping, "you seem to me very tired; you must want something to eat."



"So I do," said Renzo: "now that you've reminded me, I remember I'm still fasting."

"Stay," said the friar; and taking another porringer, he went to fill it from the large boiler; he then returned, and offered it, with a spoon, to Renzo; made him sit down on a straw mattress which served him for a bed; went to a cask that stood in one corner, and drew a glass of wine, which he set on a little table near his guest; and then, taking up his own porringer, seated himself beside him.

"Oh, Father Cristoforo!" said Renzo, "is it your business to do all this? But you are always the same. I thank you with all my heart."

"Don't thank me," said the friar: "that belongs to the poor; but you too are a poor man just now. Now, then, tell me what I don't know; tell me about our poor Lucia, and try to do it in a few words, for time is scarce, and there is plenty to be done, as you see."

Renzo began, between one spoonful and another, to relate the history of Lucia, how she had been sheltered in the monastery at Monza, how she had been forcibly carried off. . . . At the idea of such sufferings and such dangers, and at the thought that it was he who had directed the poor innocent to that place, the good friar became almost breathless with emotion; but he was quickly relieved on hearing how she had been miraculously liberated, restored to her mother, and placed by her with Donna Prassede.

"Now I will tell you about myself," pursued the narrator; and he briefly sketched the day he spent in Milan, and his flight, and how he had long been absent from home, and now, every thing being turned upside down, he had ventured to go thither; how he had not found Agnese there; and how he had learned at Milan that Lucia was at the Lazzeretto. "And here I am," he concluded; "here I am to look for her, to see if



she's still living, and if . . . she'll still have me . . . because . . . sometimes . . ."

"But how were you directed here?" asked the friar. "Have you any information whereabouts she was lodged, or at what time she came?"

"None, dear Father; none, except that she *is* here, if, indeed, she be still living, which may God grant!"

"Oh, you poor fellow! But what search have you yet made here?"

"I've wandered and wandered about, but hitherto I've scarcely seen anything but men. I thought that the women must be in a separate quarter, but I haven't yet succeeded in finding it; if it is really so, now you can tell me."

"Don't you know, my son, that men are forbidden to enter that quarter, unless they have some business there?"

"Well, and what could happen to me?"

"The regulation is just and good, my dear son; and if the number and weight of sorrows forbid the possibility of its being respected with full rigour, is that a reason why an honest man should transgress it?"

"But, Father Cristoforo," said Renzo, "Lucia ought to be my wife; you know how we've been separated; it's twenty months that I've suffered and borne patiently; I've come as far as here, at the risk of so many things, one worse than the other; and now then . . ."

"I don't know what to say," resumed the friar, replying rather to his own thoughts than to the words of the young man. "You are going with a good intention; and would to God that all who have free access to that place would conduct themselves as I can feel sure you will do! God, who certainly blesses this your perseverance of affection, this your faithfulness in wishing and seeking for her whom He has given you, God, who is more rigorous than men, yet more indulgent, will not regard what may be irregular in your mode of seeking



for her. Only remember, that for your behaviour in this place we shall both have to render an account, not, probably, to men, but, without fail, at the bar of God. Come this way." So saying, he rose: Renzo followed his example; and, without neglecting to listen to his words, had, in the mean time, determined in himself not to speak, as he had at first intended, about Lucia's vow.—If he hears this, too,—thought he,—he will certainly raise more difficulties. Either I will find her, and then there will be time enough to discuss it, or . . . and then! what will it matter?—

Leading him to the door of the cabin, which faced towards the north, the friar resumed: "Listen to me; Father Felice, the president of the Lazzaretto, will to-day conduct the few who have recovered to perform their quarantine elsewhere. You see that church there in the middle . . ." and raising his thin and tremulous hand, he pointed out to the left, through the cloudy atmosphere, the cupola of the little temple rising above the miserable tents, and continued: "About there they are now assembling, to go out in procession through the gate by which you must have entered."

"Ah! it was for this, then, that they were trying to clear the passage."

"Just so: and you must also have heard some tollings of the bell."

"I heard one."

"It was the second: when the third rings, they will all be assembled: Father Felice will address a few words to them; and then they will set off. At this signal, do you go thither; contrive to place yourself behind the assembly on the edge of the passage, where, without giving trouble, or being observed, you can watch them pass; and look . . . look . . . look if she is there. If it be not God's will that she should be there, that quarter . . ." and he again raised his hand, and pointed to the side of the



edifice which faced them, "that quarter of the building, and part of the field before it, are assigned to the women. You will see some paling that divides this from that enclosure, but here and there broken and interrupted, so that you'll find no difficulty in gaining admittance. Once in, if you do nothing to give offence, no one probably will say anything to you; if, however, they should make any opposition, say that Father Cristoforo of \* \* \* knows you, and will answer for you. Seek her there; seek her with confidence and . . . with resignation. For you must remember it is a great thing you have come to ask here: a person alive within the *Lazzeretto*! Do you know how often I have seen my poor people here renewed? how many I have seen carried off! how few go out recovered! . . . Go, prepared to make a sacrifice . . ."

"Aye! I understand!" interrupted Renzo, his eyes rolling wildly, and his face becoming very dark and threatening: "I understand! I'll go: I'll look in one place or another, from top to bottom of the *Lazzeretto* . . . and if I don't find her! . . ."

"If you don't find her?" said the friar, with an air of grave and serious expectation, and an admonishing look.

But Renzo, whose anger had for some time been swelling in his bosom, and now clouded his sight, and deprived him of all feelings of respect, repeated and continued: "If I don't find her, I'll succeed in finding somebody else. Either in Milan, or in his detestable palace, or at the end of the world, or in the abode of the devil, I'll find that rascal who separated us; that villain, but for whom Lucia would have been mine twenty months ago; and if we had been doomed to die, we would at least have died together. If that fellow still lives, I'll find him . . ."

"Renzo!" said the friar, grasping him by one arm, and gazing on him still more severely.



"And if I find him," continued he, perfectly blinded with rage, "if the plague hasn't already wrought justice . . . . This is no longer a time when a coward, with his bravoës at his heels, can drive people to desperation, and then mock at them : a time is come when men meet each other face to face . . . . I'll get justice!"

"Miserable wretch!" cried Father Cristoforo, in a voice which had assumed its former full and sonorous tone: "Miserable wretch!" And he raised his sunken head, his cheeks became flushed with their original colour, and the fire that flashed from his eyes had something terrible in it. "Look about you, miserable man!" And while with one hand he grasped, and strongly shook, Renzo's arm, he waved the other before him, pointing, as well as he could, to the mournful scene around them. "See who is He that chastises! Who is He that judges, and is not judged! He that scourges, and forgives! But you, a worm of the earth, you would get justice! You! do you know what justice is? Away, unhappy man; away with you! I hoped . . . . yes, I did hope that, before my death, God would have given me the comfort of hearing that my poor Lucia was alive; perhaps of seeing her, and hearing her promise me that she would send one prayer towards the grave where I shall be laid. Go, you have robbed me of this hope! God has not let her remain upon earth for you; and you, surely, cannot have the hardihood to believe yourself worthy that God should think of comforting you. He will have thought of *her*, for she was one of those souls for whom eternal consolations are reserved. Go! I've no longer time to listen to you."

And so saying, he threw from him Renzo's arm, and moved towards a cabin of sick.

"Ah, Father!" said Renzo, following him with a supplicating air, "will you send me away in this manner?"



"What!" rejoined the Capuchin, relaxing nothing of his severity; "dare you require that I should steal the time from these poor afflicted ones, who are waiting for me to speak to them of the pardon of God, to listen to your words of fury, your propositions of revenge? I listened to you when you asked consolation and direction; I neglected one duty of charity for the sake of another; but now you have vengeance in your heart: what do you want with me? Begone! I have beheld those die here who have been offended and have forgiven; offenders who have mourned that they could not humble themselves before the offended: I have wept with both one and the other; but what have I to do with you?"

"Ah! I forgive him! I forgive him, indeed, and for ever!" exclaimed the youth.

"Renzo!" said the friar, with more tranquil sternness: "bethink yourself, and just say how often you have forgiven him."

And having waited a moment without receiving a reply, he suddenly bent his head, and with an appeased voice resumed: "You know why I bear this habit?"

Renzo hesitated.

"You know it!" resumed the old man.

"I do," answered Renzo.

"I too have hated, and therefore I have rebuked you for a thought, for a word; the man whom I hated, whom I cordially hated, whom I had long hated, that man I murdered!"

"Yes, but a tyrant! one of those . . . ."

"Hush!" interrupted the friar: "think you that if there were a good reason for it, I shouldn't have found it in thirty years? Ah! if I could now instil into your heart the sentiment I have ever since had, and still have, for the man I hated! If I could! I? But God can: may He do so! . . . . Listen, Renzo; He wishes you more good than you even wish yourself: you have dared



to meditate revenge; but He has power and mercy enough to prevent you; He bestows upon you a favour of which another was too unworthy. You know, and you have often and often said it, that He can arrest the hand of the oppressor; but, remember, He can also arrest that of the revengeful; and think you that, because you are poor, because you are injured, He cannot defend against your vengeance a man whom He has created in His own image? Did you think that He would suffer you to do all you wished? No! but do you know what He can do? You may hate and be lost for ever; you may, by such a temper of mind as this, deprive yourself of every blessing. For, however things may go with you, whatever condition you may be placed in, rest assured that all will be punishment until you have forgiven—forgiven in such a way, that you may never again be able to say, I forgive him."

"Yes, yes," said Renzo, with deep shame and emotion: "I see now that I have never before really forgiven him; I see that I have spoken like a beast, and not like a Christian: and now, by the grace of God, I *will* forgive him; yes, I'll forgive him from my very heart."

"And supposing you were to see him?"

"I would pray the Lord to give *me* patience, and to touch *his* heart."

"Would you remember that the Lord has not only commanded us to forgive our enemies, but also to love them? Would you remember that *He* so loved him as to lay down His life for him?"

"Yes, by His help, I would."

"Well, then; come and see him. You have said: 'I'll find him;' and you shall find him. Come, and you shall see against whom you would nourish hatred; to whom you could wish evil, and be ready to do it; of what life you would render yourself master!"

And, taking Renzo's hand, which he grasped as a



healthy young man would have done, he moved forward. Renzo followed, without daring to ask anything further.

After a short walk, the friar stopped near the entrance of a cabin, fixed his eyes on Renzo's face with a mixture of gravity and tenderness, and drew him in.

The first thing he observed on entering, was a sick person, seated on some straw, in the back ground, who did not, however, seem very ill, but rather recovering from illness. On seeing the Father, he shook his head, as if to say *No* : the Father bent his with an air of sorrow and resignation. Renzo, meanwhile, eyeing the surrounding objects with uneasy curiosity, beheld three or four sick persons, and distinguished one against the wall, lying upon a bed, and wrapped in a sheet, with a nobleman's cloak laid upon him as a quilt : he gazed at him, recognised Don Rodrigo, and involuntarily shrank back ; but the friar, again making him feel the hand by which he held him, drew him to the foot of the bed, and stretching over it his other hand, pointed to the man who there lay prostrate. The unhappy being was perfectly motionless ; his eyes were open, but he saw nothing ; his face was pale and covered with black spots ; his lips black and swollen ; it would have been called the face of a corpse, had not convulsive twitchings revealed a tenacity of life. His bosom heaved from time to time with painfully short respiration ; and his right hand, laid outside the cloak, pressed it closely to his heart with a firm grasp of his clenched fingers, which were of a livid colour, and black at the extremities.

" You see," said the friar, in a low and solemn voice. " This may be a punishment, or it may be mercy. The disposition you now have towards this man, who certainly has offended you, that disposition will God, whom assuredly you have offended, have towards you at the great day. Bless him, and be blessed. For four days has he lain here, as you see him, without giving any



signs of consciousness. Perhaps the Lord is ready to grant him an hour of repentance, but waits for you to ask it: perhaps it is His will that you should pray for it with that innocent creature; perhaps he reserves the mercy for your solitary prayer, the prayer of an afflicted and resigned heart. Perhaps the salvation of this man and your own depend at this moment upon yourself, upon the disposition of your mind to forgiveness, to compassion . . . to love!" He ceased; and joining his hands, bent his head over them both, as if in prayer. Renzo did the same.

They had been for a few moments in this position, when they heard the third tolling of the bell. Both moved together, as if by agreement, and went out. The one made no inquiries, the other no protestations: their countenances spoke.

"Go now," resumed the friar, "go prepared to make a sacrifice, and to bless God, whatever be the issue of your researches. And, whatever it be, come and give me an account of it: we will praise Him together."

Here, without further words, they parted; the one returned to the place he had left, the other set off to the little temple, which was scarcely more than a stone's throw distant.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

**W**HO would ever have told Renzo, a few hours before, that, in the very crisis of his search, at the approach of the moment of greatest suspense which was so soon to be decisive, his heart would have been divided between Lucia and Don Rodrigo? Yet so it was; that figure he had just beheld, came and mingled itself in all the dear or terrible pictures which either hope or fear alternately brought before him in the course of his walk; the words he had heard at the foot of that bed blended themselves with the conflicting thoughts by which his mind was agitated, and he could not conclude a prayer for the happy issue of this great experiment, without connecting with it that which he had begun there, and which the sound of the bell had abruptly terminated.

The small octagonal temple, which stood elevated from the ground by several steps, in the middle of the *Lazzeretto*, was, in its original construction, open on every



side, without other support than pilasters and columns—a perforated building, so to say. In each front was an arch between two columns; within, a portico ran round that which might more properly be called the church, but which was composed only of eight arches supported by pilasters, surmounted by a small cupola, and corresponding to those on the outside of the arcade; so that the altar, erected in the centre, might be seen from the window of each room in the enclosure, and almost from any part of the encampment. Now, the edifice being converted to quite a different use, the spaces of the eight fronts are walled up; but the ancient framework, which still remains uninjured, indicates with sufficient clearness the original condition and destination of the building.

Renzo had scarcely started, when Father Felice made his appearance in the portico of the temple, and advanced towards the arch in the middle of the side which faces the city, in front of which the assembly were arranged at the foot of the steps, and along the course prepared for them; and shortly he perceived by his manner that he had begun the sermon. He therefore went round by some little by-paths, so as to attain the rear of the audience, as had been suggested to him. Arrived there, he stood still very quietly, and ran over the whole with his eye; but he could see nothing from his position, except a mass, I had almost said, a pavement of heads. In the centre there were some covered with handkerchiefs, or veils; and here he fixed his eyes more attentively; but, failing to distinguish anything more clearly, he also raised them to where all the others were directed. He was touched and affected by the venerable figure of the speaker; and, with all the attention he could command in such a moment of expectation, listened to the following portion of his solemn address:—

“ Let us remember for a moment the thousands and



thousands who have gone forth thither;" and raising his finger above his shoulder, he pointed behind him towards the gate which led to the cemetery of San Gregorio, the whole of which was then, we might say, one immense grave: "let us cast an eye around upon the thousands and thousands who are still left here, uncertain, alas! by which way they will go forth; let us look at ourselves, so few in number, who are about to go forth restored. Blessed be the Lord! Blessed be He in His justice, blessed in His mercy! blessed in death, and blessed in life! blessed in the choice He has been pleased to make of us! Oh! why has He so pleased, my brethren, if not to preserve to Himself a little remnant, corrected by affliction, and warmed with gratitude? if not in order that, feeling more vividly than ever how life is His gift, we may esteem it as a gift from His hands deserves, and employ it in such works as we may dare to offer to Him? if not in order that the remembrance of our own sufferings may make us compassionate towards others, and ever ready to relieve them? In the meanwhile, let those in whose company we have suffered, hoped, and feared; among whom we are leaving friends and relatives, and who are all, besides, our brethren; let those among them who will see us pass through the midst of them, not only derive some relief from the thought that others are going out hence in health, but also be edified by our behaviour. God forbid that they should behold in us a clamorous festivity, a carnal joy, at having escaped that death against which they are still struggling. Let them see that we depart in thanksgivings for ourselves and prayers for them; and let them be able to say, 'Even beyond these walls they will not forget us, they will continue to pray for us poor creatures!' Let us begin from this time, from the first steps we are about to take, a life wholly made up of love. Let those who have regained their



former vigour lend a brotherly arm to the feeble ; young men, sustain the aged ; you who are left without children, look around you how many children are left without parents ! be such to them ! And this charity, covering the multitude of sins, will also alleviate your own sorrows."

Here a deep murmur of groans and sobs, which had been increasing in the assembly, was suddenly suspended, on seeing the preacher put a rope round his neck, and fall upon his knees ; and, in profound silence, they stood awaiting what he was about to say.

"For me," continued he, "and the rest of my companions who, without any merit of our own, have been chosen out for the high privilege of serving Christ in you, I humbly implore your forgiveness, if we have not worthily fulfilled so great a ministry. If slothfulness, if the ungovernableness of the flesh, has rendered us less attentive to your necessities, less ready to answer your calls ; if unjust impatience, or blameworthy weariness, has sometimes made us show you a severe and dispirited countenance ; if the miserable thought that we were necessary to you, has sometimes induced us to fail in treating you with that humility which became us ; if our frailty has led us hastily to commit any action which has been a cause of offence to you ; forgive us ! And so may God forgive you all your trespasses, and bless you." Then, making the sign of a large cross over the assembly, he rose.

We have succeeded in relating, if not the actual words, at least the sense and burden of those which he really uttered ; but the manner in which they were delivered it is impossible to describe. It was the manner of one who called it a privilege to attend upon the infected, because he felt it to be so ; who confessed he had not worthily acted up to it, because he was conscious he had not done so ; who besought forgiveness, because he was



convinced he stood in need of it. But the people who had beheld these Capuchins as they went about, engaged in nothing but waiting upon them; who had seen so many sink under the duty, and him who was now addressing them ever the foremost in toil, as in authority, except, indeed, when he himself was lying at the point of death; think with what sighs and tears they responded to such an appeal. The admirable friar then took a large cross which stood resting against a pillar, elevated it before him, left his sandals at the edge of the outside portico, and, through the midst of the crowd, which reverently made way for him, proceeded to place himself at their head.

Renzo, no less affected than if he had been one of those from whom this singular forgiveness was requested, also withdrew a little further, and succeeded in placing himself by the side of a cabin. Here he stood waiting, with his body half concealed and his head stretched forward, his eyes wide open, and his heart beating violently, but at the same time with a kind of new and particular confidence, arising, I think, from the tenderness of spirit which the sermon and the spectacle of the general emotion had excited in him.

Father Felice now came up, barefoot, with the rope round his neck, and that tall and heavy cross elevated before him; his face was pale and haggard, inspiring both sorrow and encouragement; he walked with slow, but resolute steps, like one who would spare the weakness of others; and in every thing was like a man to whom these supernumerary labours and troubles imparted strength to sustain those which were necessary, and inseparable from his charge. Immediately behind him came the taller children, barefooted for the most part, very few entirely clothed, and some actually in their shirts. Then came the women, almost every one leading a little child by the hand, and alternately chanting



the *Miserere*; while the feebleness of their voices, and the paleness and languor of their countenances, were enough to fill the heart of any one with pity who chanced to be there as a mere spectator. But Renzo was gazing and examining, from rank to rank, from face to face, without passing over one; for which the extremely slow advance of the procession gave him abundant leisure. On and on it goes; he looks and looks, always to no purpose; he keeps glancing rapidly over the crowd which still remains behind, and which is gradually diminishing: now there are very few rows;—we are at the last;—all are gone by;—all were unknown faces. With drooping arms, and head reclining on one shoulder, he suffered his eye still to wander after that little band, while that of the men passed before him. His attention was again arrested, and a new hope arose in his mind, on seeing some carts appear behind these, bearing those convalescents who were not yet able to walk. Here the women came last; and the train proceeded at so deliberate a pace, that Renzo could with equal ease review all these without one escaping his scrutiny. But what then? he examined the first cart, the second, the third, and so on, one by one, always with the same result, up to the last, behind which followed a solitary Capuchin, with a grave countenance, and a stick in his hand, as the regulator of the cavalcade. It was that Father Michele whom we have mentioned as being appointed coadjutor in the government with Father Felice.

Thus was this soothing hope completely dissipated; and, as it was dissipated, it not only carried away the comfort it had brought along with it, but, as is generally the case, left him in a worse condition than before. Now the happiest alternative was to find Lucia ill. Yet, while increasing fears took the place of the ardour of present hope, he clung with all the powers of his mind to this melancholy and fragile thread; and issuing into



the road, pursued his way towards the place the procession had just left. On reaching the foot of the little temple, he went and knelt down upon the lowest step, and there poured forth a prayer to God, or rather a crowd of unconnected expressions, broken sentences, ejaculations, entreaties, complaints, and promises; one of those addresses which are never made to men, because they have not sufficient quickness to understand them, nor patience to listen to them; they are not **great** enough to feel compassion without contempt.

He rose somewhat more re-**animated**; went round the temple, came into the other road which he had not before seen, and which led to the opposite gate, and after going on a little way, saw on both sides the paling the friar had told him of, but full of breaks and gaps, exactly as he had said. He entered through one of these, and found himself in the quarter assigned to the women. Almost at the first step he took, he saw lying on the ground a little bell, such as the *monatti* wore upon their feet, quite perfect, with all its straps and buckles; and it immediately struck him that perhaps such an instrument might serve him as a passport in that place. He therefore picked it up, and, looking round to see if any one were watching him, buckled it on. He then set himself to his search, to that search, which, were it only for the multiplicity of the objects, would have been extremely wearisome, even had those objects been anything but what they were. He began to survey, or rather to contemplate, new scenes of suffering, in part so similar to those he had already witnessed, in part so dissimilar: for, under the same calamity, there was here a different kind of suffering, so to say, a different langour, a different complaining, a different endurance, a different kind of mutual pity and assistance; there was, too, in the spectator, another kind of compassion, so to say, and another feeling of horror. He had now gone I know



not how far, without success and without accidents, when he heard behind him a "Hey!"—a call, which seemed to be addressed to him. He turned round, and saw at a little distance a commissary, who, with uplifted hand, was beckoning to none other but him, and crying, "There, in those rooms, you're wanted: here we've only just finished clearing away."

Renzo immediately perceived whom he was taken for, and that the little bell was the cause of the mistake; he called himself a great fool for having thought only of the inconveniences which this token might enable him to avoid, and not of those which it might draw down upon him; and at the same instant devised a plan to free himself from the difficulty. He repeatedly nodded to him in a hurried manner, as if to say that he understood and would obey; and then got out of his sight by slipping aside between the cabins.

When he thought himself far enough off, he began to think about dismissing this cause of offence; and to perform the operation without being observed, he stationed himself in a narrow passage between two little huts, which had their backs turned to each other. Stooping down to unloose the buckles, and in this position resting his head against the straw wall of one of the cabins, a voice reached his ear from it. . . . Oh heavens! is it possible? His whole soul was in that ear; he held his breath. . . . Yes, indeed! it is that voice! . . . "Fear of what?" said that gentle voice: "we have passed through much worse than a storm. He who has preserved us hitherto, will preserve us even now."

If Renzo uttered no cry, it was not for fear of being discovered, but because he had no breath to utter it. His knees failed beneath him, his sight became dim; but it was only for the first moment; at the second he was on his feet, more alert, more vigorous than ever;



in three bounds he was round the cabin, stood at the doorway, saw her who had been speaking, saw her standing by a bedside, and bending over it. She turned on hearing a noise; looked, fancied she mistook the object, looked again more fixedly, and exclaimed: "Oh, blessed Lord!"

"Lucia! I've found you! I've found you! It's really you! You're living!" exclaimed Renzo, advancing towards her, all in a tremble.

"Oh, blessed Lord!" replied Lucia, trembling far more violently. "You? What is this? What way? Why? The plague!"

"I've had it. And you! . . ."

"Ah! and I too. And about my mother? . . ."

"I haven't seen her, for she's at Pasturo; I believe, however, she's very well. But you . . . how pale you still are! how weak you seem! You're recovered, however, aren't you?"

"The Lord has been pleased to leave me a little longer below. Ah Renzo! why are you here?"

"Why?" said Renzo, drawing all the time nearer to her; "do you ask why? Why I should come here! Need I say why? Who is there I ought to think about? Am I no longer Renzo? Are you no longer Lucia?"

"Ah, what are you saying! What are you saying! Didn't my mother write to you? . . ."

"Aye: that indeed she did! Fine things to write to an unfortunate, afflicted, fugitive wretch—to a young fellow who has never offered you a single affront, at least!"

"But Renzo! Renzo! since you knew . . . why come? why?"

"Why come? Oh Lucia! Why come, do you say? After so many promises! Are we no longer ourselves? Don't you any longer remember? What is wanting?"

"Oh Lord!" exclaimed Lucia, piteously, clasping her



hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, "why hast Thou not granted me the mercy of taking me to Thyself! . . . . Oh Renzo, whatever have you done? See; I was beginning to hope that . . . . in time . . . . you would have forgotten me . . . ."

"A fine hope, indeed! Fine things to tell me to my face!"

"Ah, what have you done? and in this place! among all this misery! among these sights! here, where they do nothing but die, you have! . . ."

"We must pray God for those who die, and hope that they will go to a good place; but it isn't surely fair, even for this reason, that they who live should live in despair. . . ."

"But Renzo! Renzo! you don't think what you're saying. A promise to the Madonna!—a vow!"

"And I tell you they are promises that go for nothing."

"Oh Lord! What do you say? where have you been all this time? whom have you mixed with? how are you talking?"

"I'm talking like a good Christian; and I think better of the Madonna than you do; for I believe she doesn't wish for promises that injure one's fellow-creatures. If the Madonna had spoken, then, indeed! But what has happened? a mere fancy of your own. Don't you know what you ought to promise the Madonna? promise her that the first daughter we have, we'll call her Maria; for that I'm willing to promise too: these are things that do much more honour to the Madonna; these are devotions that have some use in them, and do no harm to any one."

"No, no; don't say so: you don't know what you are saying; you don't know what it is to make a vow; you've never been in such circumstances; you haven't tried. Leave me, leave me, for Heaven's sake!"



And she impetuously rushed from him, and returned towards the bed.

"Lucia!" said he, without stirring, "just tell me this one thing: if there was not this reason . . . would you be the same to me as ever?"

"Heartless man!" replied Lucia, turning round, and with difficulty restraining her tears: "when you've made me say what's quite useless, what would do me harm, and what, perhaps, would be sinful, will you be content then? Go away—oh, do go! think no more of me; we were not intended for each other. We shall meet again above; now we cannot have much longer to stay in this world. Ah, go! try to let my mother know that I'm recovered; that here, too, God has always helped me; and that I've found a kind creature, this good lady, who's like a mother to me; tell her I hope she will be preserved from this disease, and that we shall see each other again, when and how God pleases. Go away, for Heaven's sake, and think no more about me . . . except when you say your prayers."

And, like one who has nothing more to say, and wishes to hear nothing further,—like one who would withdraw herself from danger, she again retreated closer to the bed where lay the lady she had mentioned.

"Listen, Lucia, listen," said Renzo, without, however, attempting to go any nearer.

"No, no; go away, for charity's sake!"

"Listen: Father Cristoforo . . ."

"What?"

"He's here."

"Here! Where? How do you know?"

"I've spoken to him a little while ago; I've been with him for a short time: and a religious man like him, it seems to me . . ."

"He's here! to assist the poor sick, I dare say. But he? has he had the plague?"



"Ah Lucia! I'm afraid, I'm sadly afraid . . ." And while Renzo was thus hesitating to pronounce the words which were so distressing to himself, and he felt must be equally so to Lucia, she had again left the bedside, and was once more drawing near him: "I'm afraid he has it now!"

"Oh, the poor holy man! But why do I say, Poor man? Poor me! How is he? is he in bed? is he attended?"

"He's up, going about, and attending upon others; but if you could see his looks, and how he totters! One sees so many, that it's too easy . . . to be sure there's no mistake!"

"Oh, and he's here indeed!"

"Yes, and only a little way off; very little further than from your house to mine . . . if you remember! . . ."

"Oh, most holy Virgin!"

"Well, very little further. You may think whether we didn't talk about you. He said things to me . . . And if you knew what he showed me! You shall hear; but now I want to tell you what he said to me first, he, with his own lips. He told me I did right to come and look for you, and that the Lord approves of a youth's acting so, and would help me to find you; which has really been the truth: but surely he's a saint. So, you see!"

"But if he said so, it was because he didn't know a word . . ."

"What would you have him know about things you've done out of your own head, without rule, and without the advice of any one? A good man, a man of judgment, as he is, would never think of things of this kind. But oh, what he showed me! . . ." And here he related his visit to the cabin: while Lucia, however her senses and her mind must have been accustomed, in that abode, to the strongest impressions, was completely overwhelmed with horror and compassion.

"And there, too," pursued Renzo, "he spoke like a



saint: he said that perhaps the Lord has designed to show mercy to that poor fellow . . . (now I really cannot give him any other name) . . . and waits to take him at the right moment; but wishes that we should pray for him together. . . . Together! did you hear?"

"Yes, yes; we will pray for him, each of us where the Lord shall place us: He will know how to unite our prayers."

"But if I tell you his very words! . . ."

"But, Renzo, he doesn't know . . ."

"But don't you see that when it is a saint who speaks, it is the Lord that makes him speak? and that he wouldn't have spoken thus, if it shouldn't really be so . . . And this poor fellow's soul! I have indeed prayed, and will still pray, for him: I've prayed from my heart, just as if it had been for a brother of mine. But how do you wish the poor creature to be, in the other world, if this matter be not settled here below, if the evils he has done be not undone? For if you'll return to reason, then all will be as at first: what has been, has been; he has had his punishment here. . . ."

"No, Renzo, no; God would not have us do evil that He may show mercy; leave Him to do this; and for us, our duty is to pray to Him. If I had died that night, could not God, then, have forgiven him? And if I've not died, if I've been delivered . . ."

"And your mother, that poor Agnese, who has always wished me well, and who strove so to see us husband and wife, has she never told you that it was a perverted idea of yours? She, who has made you listen to reason, too, at other times; for, on certain subjects, she thinks more wisely than you . . ."

"My mother! do you think my mother would advise me to break a vow! But, Renzo! you're not in your proper senses."

"Oh, will you have me say so? You women cannot



understand these things. Father Cristoforo told me to go back and tell him whether I had found you. I'm going: we'll hear what he says; whatever he thinks..."

"Yes, yes; go to that holy man; tell him that I pray for him, and ask him to do so for me, for I need it so much, so very much! But for Heaven's sake, for your own soul's sake, and mine, never come back here, to do me harm, to . . . tempt me. Father Cristoforo will know how to explain things to you, and bring you to your proper senses; he will make you set your heart at rest."

"My heart at rest! Oh, you may drive this idea out of your head. You've already had those abominable words written to me; and I know what I've suffered from them; and now you've the heart to say so to me. I tell you plainly and flatly that I'll never set my heart at rest. You want to forget me; but I don't want to forget you. And I assure you—do you hear?—that if you make me lose my senses, I shall never get them again. Away with my business, away with good rules. Will you condemn me to be a madman all my life? and like a madman I shall be. . . . And that poor fellow! The Lord knows whether I've not forgiven him from my heart; but you. . . . Will you make me think, for the rest of my life, that if he had not? . . . Lucia! you have bid me forget you: forget you! How can I? Whom do you think I have thought about for all this time? . . . And after so many things! after so many promises! What have I done to you since we parted? Do you treat me in this way because I've suffered? because I've had misfortunes? because the world has persecuted me? because I've spent so long a time from home, unhappy, and far from you? because the first moment I could, I came to look for you?"

When Lucia could sufficiently command herself to speak, she exclaimed again, joining her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, bathed in tears: "O most



holy Virgin, do thou help me ! Thou knowest that, since that night, I have never passed such a moment as this. Thou didst succour me then ; oh succour me also now ! ”

“ Yes, Lucia, you do right to invoke the Madonna ; but why will you believe that she, who is so kind, the mother of mercy, can have pleasure in making us suffer . . . . me, at any rate . . . . for a word that escaped you at a moment when you knew not what you were saying ? Will you believe that she helped you then, to bring us into trouble afterwards ? . . . If, after all, this is only an excuse ;—if the truth is, that I have become hateful to you . . . tell me so . . . speak plainly.”

“ For pity’s sake, Renzo, for pity’s sake, for the sake of your poor dead, have done, have done, don’t kill me quite ! . . . . That would not be a good conclusion. Go to Father Cristoforo, commend me to him ; and don’t come back here, don’t come back here.”

“ I go ; but you may fancy whether I shall return or not ! I’d come back if I was at the end of the world ; that I would.” And he disappeared.

Lucia went and sat down, or rather suffered herself to sink upon the ground, by the side of the bed ; and resting her head against it, continued to weep bitterly. The lady, who until now had been attentively watching and listening, but had not spoken a word, asked what was the meaning of this apparition, this meeting, these tears. But perhaps the reader, in his turn, may ask who this person was ; we will endeavour to satisfy him in a few words.

She was a wealthy tradeswoman, of about thirty years of age. In the course of a few days she had witnessed the death of her husband, in his own house, and every one of her children ; and being herself attacked shortly afterwards with the common malady, and conveyed to the Lazzeretto, she had been accommodated in this little cabin, at the time that Lucia, after having unconsciously



surmounted the virulence of the disease, and, equally unconsciously, changed her companions several times, was beginning to recover and regain her senses, which she had lost since the first commencement of her attack in Don Ferrante's house. The hut could only contain two patients: and an intimacy and affection had very soon sprung up between these associates in sickness, bereavement, and depression, alone as they were in the midst of so great a multitude, such as could scarcely have arisen from long intercourse under other circumstances. Lucia was soon in a condition to lend her services to her companion, who rapidly became worse. Now that she, too, had passed the crisis, they served as companions, encouragement, and guards to each other, had made a promise not to leave the Lazzeretto except together, and had, besides, concerted other measures to prevent their separation after having quitted it.

The merchant-woman, who, having left her dwelling, warehouse, and coffers, all well furnished, under the care of one of her brothers, a commissioner of health, was about to become sole and mournful mistress of much more than she required to live comfortably, wished to keep Lucia with her, like a daughter or sister; and to this Lucia had acceded, with what gratitude to her benefactress and to Providence the reader may imagine; but only until she could hear some tidings of her mother, and learn, as she hoped, what was her will. With her usual reserve, however, she had never breathed a syllable about her intended marriage, nor of her other remarkable adventures. But now, in such agitation of feelings, she had at least as much need to give vent to them, as the other a wish to listen to them. And, clasping the right hand of her friend in both hers, she immediately began to satisfy her inquiries, without further obstacles than those which her sobs presented to the melancholy recital.



Renzo, meanwhile, trudged off in great haste towards the quarters of the good friar. With a little care, and not without some steps thrown away, he at length succeeded in reaching them. He found the cabin: its occupant, however, was not there; but, rambling and peeping about in its vicinity, he discovered him in a tent, stooping towards the ground, or, indeed, almost lying upon his face, administering consolation to a dying person. He drew back, and waited in silence. In a few moments he saw him close the poor creature's eyes, raise himself upon his knees, and, after a short prayer, get up. He then went forward, and advanced to meet him.

"Oh!" said the friar, on seeing him approach: "Well?"

"She's there: I've found her!"

"In what state?"

"Recovered, or at least out of her bed."

"The Lord be praised!"

"But . . ." said Renzo, when he came near enough to be able to speak in an under-tone, "there's another difficulty."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that . . . You know already what a good creature this young girl is; but she's sometimes rather positive in her opinions. After so many promises, after all you know of, now she actually tells me she can't marry me, because she says,—how can I express it?—in that night of terror, her brain became heated—that is to say, she made a vow to the Madonna. Things without any foundation, arn't they? Good enough for those who have knowledge, and grounds for doing them; but for us common people, that don't well know what we ought to do . . . arn't they things that won't hold good?"

"Is she very far from here?"



"Oh, no : a few yards beyond the church."

"Wait here for me a moment," said the friar ; "and then we'll go together."

"Do you mean that you'll give her to understand . . ."

"I know nothing about it, my son ; I must first hear what she has to say to me."

"I understand," said Renzo ; and he was left, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his arms crossed on his breast, to ruminate in still-unallayed suspense. The friar again went in search of Father Vittore, begged him once more to supply his place, went into his cabin, came forth with a basket on his arm, and returning to his expectant companion, said : "Let us go." He then went forward, leading the way to that same cabin which, a little while before, they had entered together. This time he left Renzo outside ; he himself entered, and re-appeared in a moment or two, saying : "Nothing ! We must pray ; we must pray. Now," added he, "you must be my guide."

And they set off without further words. The weather had been for some time gradually becoming worse, and now plainly announced a not very distant storm. Frequent flashes of lightning broke in upon the increasing obscurity, and illuminated with momentary brilliancy the long, long roofs and arches of the porticoes, the cupola of the temple, and the more humble roofs of the cabins ; while the claps of thunder, bursting forth in sudden peals, rolled rumbling along from one quarter of the heavens to the other. The young man went forward intent upon his way, and his heart full of uneasy expectations, as he compelled himself to slacken his pace, to accommodate it to the strength of his follower ; who, wearied by his labours, suffering under the pressure of the malady, and oppressed by the sultry heat, walked on with difficulty, occasionally raising his pale face to heaven, as if to seek for freer respiration.



When they came in sight of the little cabin, Renzo stopped, turned round, and said with a trembling voice : " There she is."

They enter . . . . " See: they're there!" exclaimed the lady from her bed. Lucia turned, sprang up precipitately, and advanced to meet the aged man, crying : " Oh, whom do I see? Oh, Father Cristoforo!"

" Well, Lucia! from how many troubles has the Lord delivered you! You must indeed rejoice that you have always trusted in Him."

" Oh yes, indeed! But you, Father? Poor me, how you are altered! How are you? tell me, how are you?"

" As God wills, and as, by His grace, I will also," replied the friar, with a placid look. And drawing her on one side, he added ; " Listen: I can only stay here a few moments. Are you inclined to confide in me, as you have done hitherto?"

" Oh! are you not always my Father?"

" Then, my daughter, what is this vow that Renzo has been telling me about?"

" It's a vow that I made to the Madonna not to marry."

" But did you recollect at the time, that you were already bound by another promise?"

" When it related to the Lord and the Madonna! . . . . No; I didn't think about it."

" My daughter, the Lord approves of sacrifices and offerings when we make them of our own. It is the heart that He desires,—the will; but you could not offer him the will of another, to whom you had already pledged yourself."

" Have I done wrong?"

" No, my poor child, don't think so: I believe, rather, that the holy Virgin will have accepted the intention of your afflicted heart, and have presented it to God for



you. But tell me: have you never consulted with any one on this subject?"

"I didn't think it was a sin I ought to confess; and what little good one does, one has no need to tell."

"Have you no other motive that hinders you from fulfilling the promise you have made to Renzo?"

"As to this . . . . for me . . . . what motive? . . . . I cannot say . . . . nothing else," replied Lucia, with a hesitation so expressed that it announced anything but uncertainty of thought; and her cheeks, still pale from illness, suddenly glowed with the deepest crimson.

"Do you believe," resumed the old man, lowering his eyes, "that God has given to His Church authority to remit and retain, according as it proves best, the debts and obligations that men may have contracted to Him?"

"Yes, indeed I do."

"Know, then, that we who are charged with the care of the souls in this place, have, for all those who apply to us, the most ample powers of the Church; and consequently, that I can, when you request it, free you from the obligation, whatever it may be, that you may have contracted by this your vow."

"But is it not a sin to turn back, and to repent of a promise made to the Madonna? I made it at the time with my whole heart . . . ." said Lucia, violently agitated by the assault of so unexpected a *hope*, for so I must call it, and by the uprising, on the other hand, of a terror, fortified by all the thoughts which had so long been the principal occupation of her mind.

"A sin, my daughter?" said the Father, "a sin to have recourse to the Church, and to ask her minister to make use of the authority which he has received from her, and she has received from God? I have seen how you two have been led to unite yourselves; and, assuredly, if ever it would seem that two were joined together by God, you were—you are those two; nor do



I now see that God may wish you to be put asunder. And I bless Him that He has given me, unworthy as I am, the power of speaking in His name, and returning to you your plighted word. And if you request me to declare you absolved from this vow, I shall not hesitate to do it; nay, I wish you may request me."

"Then! . . . then! . . . I do request you," said Lucia, with a countenance no longer agitated, except by modesty.

The friar beckoned to the youth, who was standing in the furthest corner, intently watching (since he could do nothing else) the dialogue in which he was so much interested; and, on his drawing near, pronounced, in an explicit voice, to Lucia, "By the authority I have received from the Church, I declare you absolved from the vow of virginity, annulling what may have been unadvised in it, and freeing you from every obligation you may thereby have contracted."

Let the reader imagine how these words sounded in Renzo's ears. His eyes eagerly thanked him who had uttered them, and instantly sought those of Lucia; but in vain.

"Return in security and peace to your former desires," pursued the Capuchin, addressing Lucia; "beseech the Lord again for those graces you once besought to make you a holy wife; and rely upon it, that He will bestow them upon you more abundantly, after so many sorrows. And you," said he, turning to Renzo, "remember, my son, that if the Church restores to you this companion, she does it not to procure for you a temporal and earthly pleasure, which, even could it be complete, and free from all intermixture of sorrow, must end in one great affliction at the moment of leaving you; but she does it to lead you both forward in that way of pleasantness which shall have no end. Love each other as companions in a journey, with the thought that you will have to part



from one another, and with the hope of being re-united for ever. Thank Heaven that you have been led to this state, not through the midst of turbulent and transitory joys, but by sufferings and misery, to dispose you to tranquil and collected joy. If God grants you children, make it your object to bring them up for Him, to inspire them with love to Him, and to all men; and then you will train them rightly in every thing else. Lucia! has he told you," and he pointed to Renzo, "whom he has seen here?"

"Oh yes, Father, he has!"

"You will pray for him! Don't be weary of doing so. And you will pray also for me! . . . My children! I wish you to have a remembrance of the poor friar." And he drew out of his basket a little box of some common kind of wood, but turned and polished with a certain Capuchin precision, and continued; "Within this is the remainder of that loaf . . . the first I asked for charity; that loaf, of which you must have heard speak! I leave it to you: take care of it; show it to your children! They will be born into a wretched world, into a miserable age, in the midst of proud and exasperating men: tell them always to forgive, always!—every thing, every thing! and to pray for the poor friar!"

So saying, he handed the box to Lucia, who received it with reverence, as if it had been a sacred relic. Then, with a calmer voice, he added, "Now then, tell me; what have you to depend upon here in Milan? Where do you propose to lodge on leaving this? And who will conduct you to your mother, whom may God have preserved in health?"

"This good lady is like a mother to me: we shall leave this place together, and then she will provide for every thing."

"God bless you," said the friar, approaching the bed.

"I, too, thank you," said the widow, "for the com-



fort you have given these poor creatures ; though I had counted upon keeping this dear Lucia always with me. But I will keep her in the meanwhile ; I will accompany her to her own country, and deliver her to her mother ; and," added she, in a lower tone, " I should like to provide her wardrobe. I have too much wealth, and have not one left out of those who should have shared it with me."

" You may thus," said the friar, " make an acceptable offering to the Lord, and at the same time benefit your neighbour. I do not recommend this young girl to you, for I see already how she has become your daughter : it only remains to bless God, who knows how to show Himself a father even in chastisement, and who, by bringing you together, has given so plain a proof of His love to both of you. But come !" resumed he, turning to Renzo, and taking him by the hand, " we two have nothing more to do here : we have already been here too long. Let us go."

" Oh, Father !" said Lucia : " Shall I see you again ? I, who am of no service in this world, have recovered ; and you ! . . . ."

" It is now a long time ago," replied the old man, in a mild and serious tone, " since I besought of the Lord a very great mercy, that I might end my days in the service of my fellow-creatures. If He now vouchsafes to grant it me, I would wish all those who have any love for me, to assist me in praising Him. Come, give Renzo your messages to your mother."

" Tell her what you have seen," said Lucia to her betrothed ; " that I have found another mother here, that we will come to her together as quickly as possible, and that I hope, earnestly hope, to find her well."

" If you want money," said Renzo, " I have about me all that you sent, and . . . ."

" No, no," interrupted the widow ; " I have only too much."



"Let us go," suggested the friar.

"Good b'ye, till we meet again, Lucia! . . . and to you too, kind lady," said Renzo, unable to find words to express all that he felt in such a moment.

"Who knows whether the Lord, in His mercy, will allow us all to meet again!" exclaimed Lucia.

"May He be with you always, and bless you," said Friar Cristoforo to the two companions; and, accompanied by Renzo, he quitted the cabin.

The evening was not far distant, and the crisis of the storm seemed still more closely impending. The Capuchin again proposed to the houseless youth to take shelter for that night in his humble dwelling. "I cannot keep you company," added he; "but you will at least be under cover."

Renzo, however, was burning to be gone, and cared not to remain any longer in such a place, where he would not be allowed to see Lucia again, nor even be able to have a little conversation with the good friar. As to the time and weather, we may safely say that night and day, sunshine and shower, zephyr and hurricane, were all the same to him at that moment. He therefore thanked his kind friend, but said that he would rather go as soon as possible in search of Agnese.

When they regained the road, the friar pressed his hand, and said, "If (as may God grant!) you find that good Agnese, salute her in my name; and beg her, and all those who are left, and remember Friar Cristoforo, to pray for him. God go with you, and bless you for ever!"

"Oh, dear Father! . . . we shall meet again?—we shall meet again?"

"Above, I hope." And with these words he parted from Renzo, who, staying to watch him till he beheld him disappear, set off hastily towards the gate, casting his farewell looks of compassion on each side over the

.



melancholy scene. There was an unusual bustle, carts rolling about, *monatti* running to and fro, people securing the curtains of the tents, and numbers of feeble creatures groping about among these, and in the porticoes, to shelter themselves from the impending storm.







## CHAPTER XXXVII.

**S**CARCELY had Renzo crossed the threshold of the Lazzeretto, and taken the way to the right, to find the narrow road by which, in the morning, he had come out under the walls, when a few large and scattered drops began to fall, which lighting upon, and rebounding from, the white and parched road, stirred up a cloud of very fine dust; these soon multiplied into rain; and before he reached the by-path, it poured down in torrents. Far from feeling any disquietude, Renzo luxuriated in it, and enjoyed himself in that refreshing coolness, that murmur, that general motion of the grass and leaves, shaking, dripping, revived, and glistening, as they were; he drew in several deep and long breaths; and in that relenting of nature, felt more freely and more vividly, as it were, that which had been wrought in his own destiny.

But, how far fuller and more unalloyed would have been this feeling, could he have divined what actually



was beheld a few days afterwards, that that rain carried off,—washed away, so to say,—the contagion; that, from that day forward, the Lazzeretto, if it was not about to restore to the living all the living whom it contained, would engulf, at least, no others; that, within one week, doors and shops would be seen re-opened; quarantine would scarcely be spoken of any longer; and of the pestilence only a solitary token or two remain here and there; that trace which every pestilence had left behind it for some time.

Our traveller, then, proceeded with great alacrity, without having formed any plans as to where, how, when, or whether at all, he should stop for the night, and anxious only to get forward, to reach his own village quickly, to find somebody to talk to, somebody to whom he might relate his adventures, and above all, to set off again immediately on his way to Pasturo, in search of Agnese. His mind was quite confused by the events of the day; but, from beneath all the misery, the horrors, and the dangers he recalled, one little thought always rose to the surface:—I've found her; she's recovered; she's mine!—And then he would give a spring which scattered a drizzling shower around, like a spaniel coming up out of the water; at other times he would content himself with rubbing his hands: and then, on he would go more cheerily than ever. With his eyes fixed upon the road, he gathered up, so to say, the thoughts he had left there in the morning, and the day before, as he came; and, with the greatest glee, those very same which he had then most sought to banish from his mind—the doubts, the difficulty of finding her, of finding her alive, amidst so many dead and dying!—And I have found her alive!—he concluded. He recurred to the most critical moments, the most terrible obscurities, of that day; he fancied himself with that knocker in his hand: will she be here or not? and a



reply so little encouraging ; and before he had time to digest it, that crowd of mad rascals upon him ; and that Lazzeretto, that sea ? there I wished to find her ! And to have found her there ! He recalled the moment when the procession of convalescents had done passing by : what a moment ! what bitter sorrow at not finding her ! and now it no longer mattered to him. And that quarter for the women ! And there, behind that cabin, when he was least expecting it, to hear that voice, that very voice ! And to see her ! To see her standing ! But what then ? There was still that knot about the vow, and drawn tighter than ever. 'This too untied. And that madness against Don Rodrigo, that cursed canker which exasperated all his sorrows, and poisoned all his joys, even that rooted out. So that it would be difficult to imagine a state of greater satisfaction, had it not been for the uncertainty about Agnese, his grief for Father Cristoforo, and the remembrance that he was still in the midst of a pestilence.

He arrived at Sesto as evening was coming on, without any token of the rain being about to stop. But feeling more than ever disposed to go forward ; considering, too, the many difficulties of finding a lodging, and saturated as he was with wet, he would not even think of an inn. The only necessity that made itself felt was a very craving appetite ; for success, such as he had met with, would have enabled him to digest something more substantial than the Capuchin's little bowl of soup. He looked about to see if he could discover a baker's shop, quickly found one, and received two loaves with the tongs, and the other ceremonies we have described. One he put into his pocket, the other to his mouth ; and on he went.

When he passed through Monza, the night had completely closed in : he managed, however, to leave the town in the direction that led to the right road. But



except for this qualification, which, to say the truth, was a great compensation, it may be imagined what kind of a road it was, and how it was becoming worse and worse every moment. Sunk (as were all; and we must have said so elsewhere) between two banks, almost like the bed of a river, it might then have been called, if not a river, at least in reality a water-course; and in many places were holes and puddles from which it was difficult to recover one's shoes, and sometimes one's footing. But Renzo extricated himself as he could, without impatience, without bad language, and without regrets; consoling himself with the thought that every step, whatever it might cost him, brought him further on his way, that the rain would stop when God should see fit, that day would come in its own time, and that the journey he was meanwhile performing, would then be performed.

Indeed, I may say, he never even thought of this, except in the moments of greatest need. These were digressions: the grand employment of his mind was going over the history of the melancholy years that had passed, so many perplexities, so many adversities, so many moments in which he had been about to abandon even hope, and give up every thing for lost; and then to oppose to these the images of so far different a future, the arrival of Lucia, and the wedding, and the setting up house, and the relating to each other past vicissitudes, and, in short, their whole life.

How he fared at forks of the road, for some indeed there were; whether his little experience, together with the glimmering twilight, enabled him always to find the right road, or whether he always turned into it by chance, I am not able to say; for he himself, who used to relate his history with great minuteness, rather tediously than otherwise (and every thing leads us to believe that our anonymous author had heard it from him more



than once), he himself declared, at this place, that he remembered no more of that night than if he had spent it in bed, dreaming. Certain it is, however, that towards its close, he found himself on the banks of the Adda.

It had never ceased raining a moment; but at a certain stage it had changed from a perfect deluge to more moderate rain, and then into a fine, silent, uniform drizzle: the lofty and rarefied clouds formed a continual, but light and transparent, veil; and the twilight dawn allowed Renzo to distinguish the surrounding country. Within this tract was his own village; and what he felt at the thought it is impossible to describe. I can only say that those mountains, that neighbouring *Resegone*, the whole territory of Lecco, had become, as it were, his own property. He glanced, too, at himself, and discovered that he looked, to say the truth, somewhat of a contrast to what he felt, to what he even fancied he ought to look: his clothes shrunk up and clinging to his body: from the crown of his head to his girdle one dripping, saturated mass: from his girdle to the soles of his feet, mud and splashes: the places which were free from these might themselves have been called spots and splashes. And could he have seen his whole figure in a looking-glass, with the brim of his hat unstiffened and hanging down, and his hair straight and sticking to his face, he would have considered himself a still greater beauty. As to being tired, he may have been so; but, if he were, he knew nothing about it: and the freshness of the morning, added to that of the night and of his trifling bath, only inspired him with more energy, and a wish to get forward on his way more rapidly.

He is at Pescate; he pursues his course along the remaining part of the road that runs by the side of the Adda, giving a melancholy glance, however, at Pescarenico; he crosses the bridge; and, through fields and lanes, shortly arrives at his friend's hospitable dwelling.



He, who, only just risen, was standing in the doorway to watch the weather, raised his eyes in amazement at that strange figure, so drenched, bespattered, and, we may say, dirty, yet at the same time, so lively and at ease: in his whole life he had never seen a man worse equipped, and more thoroughly contented.

"Aha!" said he: "here already? and in such weather! How have things gone?"

"She's there," said Renzo: "she's there, she's there."

"Well?"

"Recovered, which is better. I have to thank the Lord and the Madonna for it as long as I live. But oh! such grand things, such wonderful things! I'll tell you all afterwards."

"But what a plight you are in!"

"I'm a beauty, am I not?"

"To say the truth, you might employ the overplus above to wash off the overplus below. But wait a minute, and I'll make you a good fire."

"I won't refuse it, I assure you. Where do you think it caught me? just at the gate of the Lazzeretto. But never mind! let the weather do its own business, and I mine."

His friend then went out, and soon returned with two bundles of faggots: one he laid on the ground, the other on the hearth, and with a few embers remaining over from the evening, quickly kindled a fine blaze. Renzo, meanwhile, had taken off his hat, and giving it two or three shakes, threw it upon the ground; and, not quite so easily, had also pulled off his doublet. He then drew from his breeches' pocket his poniard, the sheath of which was so wet that it seemed to have been laid in soak; this he put upon the table, saying, "This, too, is in a pretty plight; but there's rain! there's rain! thank God . . . . I've had some hair-breadth escapes! . . . . I'll tell you by and by." And he began rubbing



his hands. "Now do me another kindness," added he: "that little bundle that I left upstairs, just fetch it for me, for before these clothes that I have on dry . . . ."

Returning with the bundle, his friend said, "I should think you must have a pretty good appetite: I fancy you haven't wanted enough to drink by the way; but something to eat . . . ."

"I bought two rolls yesterday towards evening; but, indeed, they haven't touched my lips."

"Leave it to me," said his friend; he then poured some water into a kettle, which he suspended upon the hook over the fire; and added, "I'm going to milk: when I come back the water will be ready, and we'll make a good *polenta*. You, meanwhile, can dress yourself at your leisure."

When left alone, Renzo, not without some difficulty, took off the rest of his clothes, which were almost as if glued to his skin; he then dried himself, and dressed himself anew from head to foot. His friend returned, and set himself to make the *polenta*, Renzo, meanwhile, sitting by in expectation.

"Now I feel that I'm tired," said he. "But it's a fine long stretch! That's nothing, however. I've so much to tell you it will take the whole day. Oh, what a state Milan's in! What one's obliged to see! what one's obliged to touch! Enough to make one loath oneself. I dare say I wanted nothing less than the little washing I've had. And what those gentry down there would have done to me! You shall hear. But if you could see the Lazzaretto! It's enough to make one lose oneself in miseries. Well, well; I'll tell you all . . . . And she's there, and you'll see her here, and she'll be my wife, and you must be a witness, and, plague or no plague, we'll be merry, at least for a few hours."

In short, he verified what he had told his friend, that



it would take all the day to relate every thing; for, as it never ceased drizzling, the latter spent the whole of it under cover, partly seated by the side of his friend, partly busied over one of his wine-vats and a little cask, and in other occupations preparatory to the vintage and the dressing of the grapes, in which Renzo failed not to lend a hand; for, as he used to say, he was one of those who are sooner tired of doing nothing than of working. He could not, however, resist taking a little run up to Agnese's cottage, to see once more a certain window, and there, too, to rub his hands with glee. He went and returned unobserved, and retired to rest in good time. In good time, too, he rose next morning; and finding that the rain had ceased, if settled fine weather had not yet returned, he set off quickly on his way to Pasturo.

It was still early when he arrived there; for he was no less willing and in a hurry to bring matters to an end, than the reader probably is. He inquired for Agnese, and heard that she was safe and well: a small cottage standing by itself was pointed out to him as the place where she was staying. He went thither, and called her by name from the street. On hearing such a call, she rushed to the window; and while she stood, with open mouth, on the point of uttering I know not what sound or exclamation, Renzo prevented her by saying, "Lucia's recovered: I saw her the day before yesterday: she sends you her love, and will be here soon. And besides these, I've so many, many things to tell you."

Between the surprise of the apparition, the joy of these tidings, and the burning desire to know more about it, Agnese began one moment an exclamation, the next a question, without finishing any; then, forgetting the precautions she had long been accustomed to take, she said, "I'll come and open the door for you."



"Wait: the plague!" said Renzo: "you've not had it, I believe?"

"No, not I: have you?"

"Yes, I have; you must therefore be prudent. I come from Milan; and you shall hear that I've been up to the eyes in the midst of the contagion. To be sure, I've changed from head to foot; but it's an abominable thing that clings to one sometimes like witchcraft. And since the Lord has preserved you hitherto, you must take care of yourself till this infection is over; for you are our mother; and I want us to live together happily for a long while, in compensation for the great sufferings we have undergone, I at least."

"But . . . ." began Agnese.

"Eh!" interrupted Renzo, "there's no *but* that will hold. I know what you mean; but you shall hear, you shall hear that there are no longer any *buts* in the way. Let us go into some open space, where we can talk at our ease, without danger, and you shall hear."

Agnese pointed out to him a garden behind the house; if he would go in, and seat himself on one of the two benches which he would find opposite each other, she would come down directly, and go and sit on the other. Thus it was arranged; and I am sure that if the reader, informed as he is of preceding events, could have placed himself there as a third party, to witness with his own eyes that animated conversation, to hear with his own ears those descriptions, questions, explanations, ejaculations, condolences, and congratulations; about Don Rodrigo, and Father Cristoforo, and every thing else, and those descriptions of the future, as clear and certain as those of the past;—I am sure, I say, he would have enjoyed it exceedingly, and would have been the last to come away. But to have this conversation upon paper, in mute words written with ink, and without meeting with a single new incident, I fancy he



would not care much for it, and would rather that we should leave him to conjecture it. Their conclusion was that they would go to keep house all together, in the territory of Bergamo, where Renzo had already gained a good footing. As to the time, they could decide nothing, because it depended upon the plague and other circumstances; but no sooner should the danger be over, than Agnese would return home to wait there for Lucia, or Lucia would wait there for her; and in the meantime Renzo would often take another trip to Pasturo, to see his mother, and to keep her acquainted with whatever might happen.

Before taking his leave, he offered money to her also, saying, "I have them all here, you see, those *scudi* you sent: I, too, made a vow not to touch them, until the mystery was cleared up. Now, however, if you want any of them, bring me a little bowl of vinegar and water, and I'll throw in the fifty *scudi*, good and glittering as you sent them."

"No, no," said Agnese; "I've more than I need still by me: keep yours untouched, and they'll do nicely to set up house with."

Renzo took his departure, with the additional consolation of having found one so dear to him safe and well. He remained the rest of that day, and for the night, at his friend's house, and on the morrow was again on his way, but in another direction, towards his adopted country.

Here he found Bortolo, still in good health, and in less apprehension of losing it; for in those few days, things had there also rapidly taken a favourable turn. New cases of illness had become rare, and the malady was no longer what it had been; there were no longer those fatal blotches, nor violent symptoms; but slight fevers, for the most part intermittent, with, at the worst, a discoloured spot, which was cured like an ordinary,



tumour. The face of the country seemed already changed; the survivors began to come forth, to reckon up their numbers, and mutually to exchange condolences and congratulations. There was already a talk of resuming business again; such masters as survived already began to look out for and bespeak workmen, and principally in those branches of art where the number had been scarce even before the contagion, as was that of silk-weaving. Renzo, without any display of levity, promised his cousin (with the proviso, however, that he obtained all due consent) to resume his employment, when he could come in company to settle himself in the country. In the meanwhile he gave orders for the most necessary preparations: he provided a more spacious dwelling, a task become only too easy to execute at a small cost, and furnished it with all necessary articles, this time breaking into his little treasure, but without making any very great hole in it, for of every thing there was a superabundance at a very moderate price.

In the course of a few days he returned to his native village, which he found still more signally changed for the better. He went over immediately to Pasturo; there he found Agnese in good spirits again, and ready to return home as soon as might be, so that he accompanied her thither at once: nor will we attempt to describe what were their feelings and words on again beholding those scenes together. Agnese found every thing as she had left it; so that she was forced to declare, that, considering it was a poor widow and her daughter, the angels had kept guard over it.

"And that other time," added she, "when it might have been thought that the Lord was looking elsewhere, and thought not of us, since He suffered all our little property to be carried away, yet, after all, He showed us the contrary; for He sent me from another quarter that



grand store of money which enabled me to restore every thing. I say every thing, but I am wrong; because Lucia's wedding-clothes, which were stolen among the rest, good and complete as they were at first, were still wanting; and behold, now they come to us in another direction. Who would have told me, when I was working so busily to prepare those others, You think you are working for Lucia: nay, my good woman! you are working for you know not whom. Heaven knows what sort of being will wear this veil, and all those clothes: those for Lucia,—the real wedding-dress which is to serve for her, will be provided by a kind soul whom you know not, nor even that there is such a person."

Agnese's first care was to prepare for this kind soul the most comfortable accommodations her poor little cottage could afford; then she went to procure some silk to wind, and thus, employed with her reel, beguiled the wearisome hours of delay.

Renzo, on his part, suffered not these days, long enough in themselves, to pass away in idleness: fortunately he understood two trades, and of these two chose that of a labourer. He partly helped his kind host, who considered it particularly fortunate, at such a time, to have a workman frequently at his command, and a workman, too, of his abilities; and partly cultivated and restored to order Agnese's little garden, which had completely run wild during her absence. As to his own property, he never thought about it at all, because, he said, it was too entangled a periwig, and wanted more than one pair of hands to set it to rights again. He did not even set foot into it; still less into his house: it would have pained him too much to see its desolation; and he had already resolved to dispose of every thing, at whatever price, and to spend in his new country all that he could make by the sale.

If the survivors of the plague were to one another resuscitated, as it were, he, to his fellow-countrymen,



was, so to say, doubly so: every one welcomed and congratulated him, every one wanted to hear from him his history. The reader will perhaps say, how went on the affair of his outlawry? It went on very well: he scarcely thought anything more about it, supposing that they who could have enforced it would no longer think about it themselves: nor was he mistaken. This arose not merely from the pestilence, which had thwarted so many undertakings; but, as may have been seen in more than one place in this story, it was a common occurrence in those days, that special as well as general orders against persons (unless there were some private and powerful animosity to keep them alive and render them availing), often continued without taking effect, if they had not done so on their first promulgation; like musket-balls, which, if they strike no blow, lie quietly upon the ground without giving molestation to any one. A necessary consequence of the extreme facility with which these orders were flung about, both right and left. Man's activity is limited; and whatever excess there was in the making of regulations, must have produced so much greater a deficiency in the execution of them. What goes into the sleeves cannot go into the skirt.\*

If any one wants to know how Renzo got on with Don Abbondio, during this interval of expectation, I need only say that they kept at a respectful distance from each other; the latter for fear of hearing a whisper about the wedding; and at the very thought of such a thing, his imagination conjured up Don Rodrigo with his bravoos on the one side, and the Cardinal with his arguments on the other; and the former, because he had resolved not to mention it to him till the very last moment, being unwilling to run the risk of making him

\* " *Quel che va nelle maniche non può andar ne' gheroni.*"



restive beforehand, of stirring up—who could tell?—some difficulty, and of entangling things by useless chit-chat. All his chit-chat was with Agnese. “Do you think she’ll come soon?” one would ask. “I hope so,” would the other reply; and frequently the one who had given the answer, would, not long afterwards, make the same inquiry. With these and similar cheats they endeavoured to beguile the time, which seemed to them longer and longer in proportion as more passed away.

We will make the reader, however, pass over all this period in one moment, by briefly stating that, a few days after Renzo’s visit to the Lazzeretto, Lucia left it with the kind widow; that, a general quarantine having been enjoined, they kept it together in the house of the latter; that part of the time was spent in preparing Lucia’s wardrobe, at which, after sundry ceremonious objections, she was obliged to work herself; and that the quarantine having expired, the widow left her warehouse and dwelling under the custody of her brother, the commissioner, and prepared to set off on her journey with Lucia. We could, too, speedily add,—they set off, arrived, and all the rest; but, with all our willingness to accommodate ourselves to this haste of the reader’s, there are three things appertaining to this period of time, which we are not willing to pass over in silence; and with two, at least, we believe the reader himself will say that we should have been to blame in so doing.

The first is, that when Lucia returned to relate her adventures to the good widow more in particular, and with greater order than she could do in her agitation of mind when she first confided them to her, and when she more expressly mentioned the Signora who had given her shelter in the monastery at Monza, she learnt from her friend things which, by giving her the key of many mysteries, filled her mind with melancholy and



fearful astonishment. She learnt from the widow that the unhappy lady, having fallen under suspicion of most atrocious conduct, had been conveyed, by order of the Cardinal, to a monastery at Milan; that there, after long indulgence in rage and struggles, she had repented, and confessed her faults, and that her present life was one of such voluntary inflictions, that no one, except by depriving her of that life entirely, could have invented a severer punishment for her. Should any one wish to be more particularly acquainted with this melancholy history, he will find it in the work and at the place which we have elsewhere quoted in relation to this same person.\*

The other fact is, that Lucia, after making inquiries about Father Cristoforo of all the Capuchins she could meet with in the Lazzeretto, heard there, with more sorrow than surprise, that he had died of the pestilence.

Lastly, before leaving Milan, she wished also to ascertain something about her former patrons, and to perform, as she said, an act of duty, if any yet remained. The widow accompanied her to the house, where they learned that both one and the other had been carried off with the multitude. When we have said of Donna Prassede that she was dead, we have said all; but Don Ferrante, considering that he was a man of erudition, is deemed by our anonymous author worthy of more extended mention; and we, at our own risk, will transcribe, as nearly as possible, what he has left on record about him.

He says, then, that, on the very first whisper of pestilence, Don Ferrante was one of the most resolute, and ever afterwards one of the most persevering, in denying it, not indeed with loud clamours, like the people, but with arguments, of which, at least, no one could complain that they wanted concatenation.

\* Ripamonti, Hist. Pat. Dec.V. lib. vi. cap.iii.



“*In rerum natura*,” he used to say, “there are but two species of things, substances and accidents; and if I prove that the contagion cannot be either one or the other, I shall have proved that it does not exist—that it is a mere chimera. Here I am, then. Substances are either spiritual or material. That the contagion is a spiritual substance, is an absurdity no one would venture to maintain; it is needless, therefore, to speak of it. Material substances are either simple or compound. Now, the contagion is not a simple substance; and this may be shown in a few words. It is not an ethereal substance; because, if it were, instead of passing from one body to another, it would fly off as quickly as possible to its own sphere. It is not aqueous; because it would wet things, and be dried up by the wind. It is not igneous; because it would burn. It is not earthy; because it would be visible. Neither is it a compound substance; because it must by all means be sensible to the sight and the touch; and who has seen this contagion? who has touched it? It remains to be seen whether it can be an accident. Worse and worse. These gentlemen, the doctors, say that it is communicated from one body to another; for this is their Achilles, this the pretext for issuing so many useless orders. Now, supposing it an accident, it comes to this, that it must be a transitive accident, two words quite at variance with each other; there being no plainer and more established fact in the whole of philosophy than this, that an accident cannot pass from one subject to another. For if, to avoid this Scylla, we shelter ourselves under the assertion that it is an accident produced, we fly from Scylla and run upon Charybdis: because, if it be produced, then it is not communicated, it is not propagated, as people go about affirming. These principles being laid down, what use is it to come talking to us so about weals, pustules, and carbuncles? . . .”



"All absurdities," once escaped from somebody or other.

"No, no," resumed Don Ferrante, "I don't say so : science is science ; only we must know how to employ it. Weals, pustules, carbuncles, parotides, violaceous tumours, black swellings, are all respectable words, which have their true and legitimate signification ; but I say that they don't affect the question at all. Who denies that there may be such things, nay, that there actually are such ? All depends upon seeing where they come from."

Here began the woes even of Don Ferrante. So long as he confined himself to declaiming against the opinion of a pestilence, he found everywhere willing, obliging, and respectful listeners ; for it cannot be expressed how much authority the opinion of a learned man by profession carries with it, while he is attempting to prove to others things of which they are already convinced. But when he came to distinguish, and to try and demonstrate that the error of these physicians did not consist in affirming that there was a terrible and prevalent malady, but in assigning its rules and causes ; then (I am speaking of the earliest times, when no one would listen to a word about pestilence), then, instead of listeners, he found rebellious and intractable opponents ; then there was no room for speechifying, and he could no longer put forth his doctrines but by scraps and piecemeal.

"There's the true reason only too plainly, after all," said he ; "and even they are compelled to acknowledge it, who maintain that other empty proposition besides. . . . Let them deny, if they can, that fatal conjunction of Saturn with Jupiter. And when was it ever heard say that influences may be propagated. . . . And would these gentlemen deny the existence of influences ? Will they deny that there are stars, or tell me that they are



placed up there for no purpose, like so many pin-heads stuck into a pincushion? . . . But what I cannot understand about these doctors is this; to confess that we are under so malignant a conjunction, and then to come and tell us, with an eager face, 'Don't touch this, and don't touch that, and you'll be safe!' As if this avoiding of material contact with terrestrial bodies could hinder the virtual effect of celestial ones! And such anxiety about burning old clothes! Poor people! will you burn Jupiter, will you burn Saturn?"

*His fretus*, that is to say, on these grounds, he used no precautions against the pestilence; took it, went to bed, and went to die, like one of Metastasio's heroes, quarrelling with the stars.

And that famous library of his? Perhaps it is still there, distributed around his walls.

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## • CHAPTER XXXVIII.



NE fine evening, Agnese heard a carriage stop at the door.—It is she, and none other! —It was indeed Lucia, with the good widow the mutual greetings we leave the reader to imagine.

Next morning Renzo arrived in good time, totally ignorant of what had happened, and with no other intentions than of pouring out his feelings a little with Agnese about Lucia's long delay. The gesticulations he made, and the exclamations he uttered, on finding her thus before his eyes, we will also refer to our reader's imagination. Lucia's exhibitions of pleasure towards him were such, that it will not take many words to give an account of them. "Good morning, Renzo: how do you do?" said she, with downcast eyes, and an air of composure. Nor let the reader think that Renzo considered this mode of reception too cold, and took it at all amiss. He entered fully into the meaning of her behaviour; and as among educated people one knows



how to make allowance for compliments, so he understood very well what feelings lay hidden beneath these words. Besides, it was easy enough to perceive that she had two ways of proffering them, one for Renzo, and another for all those she might happen to know.

"It does me good to see you," replied the youth, making use of a set phrase, which he himself, however, had invented on the spur of the moment.

"Our poor Father Cristoforo! . . . ." said Lucia : "pray for his soul : though one may be almost sure that he is now praying for us above."

"I expected no less, indeed," said Renzo. Nor was this the only melancholy chord touched in the course of this dialogue. But what then ? Whatever subject was the topic of conversation, it always seemed to them delightful. Like a capricious horse, which halts and plants itself in a certain spot, and lifts first one hoof and then another, and sets it down again in the self-same place, and cuts a hundred capers before taking a single step, and then all on a sudden starts on its career, and speeds forward as if borne on the wings of the wind ; such had time become in his eyes : at first, minutes had seemed hours ; now hours seemed to him like minutes.

The widow not only did not spoil the party, but entered into it with great spirit : nor could Renzo, when he saw her lying on that miserable bed in the Lazzaretto, have imagined her of so companionable and cheerful a disposition. But the Lazzaretto and the country, death and a wedding, are not exactly one and the same thing. With Agnese she was very soon on friendly terms ; and it was a pleasure to see her with Lucia, so tender, and, at the same time, playful, rallying her gracefully and without effort, just so much as was necessary to give more courage to her words and motions.

At length Renzo said that he was going to Don Abbondio, to make arrangements about the wedding.



He went, and with a certain air of respectful raillery, "Signor Curate," said he, "have you at last lost that headache, which you told me prevented your marrying us? We are now in time; the bride is here, and I've come to know when it will be convenient to you: but this time, I must request you to make haste."

Don Abbondio did not, indeed, reply that he would not; but he began to hesitate, to bring forward sundry excuses, to throw out sundry insinuations: and why bring himself into notice and publish his name, with that proclamation for his seizure still out against him? and that the thing could be done equally well elsewhere; and this, that, and the other argument.

"Oh, I see!" said Renzo: "you've still a little pain in your head. But listen, listen." And he began to describe in what state he had beheld poor Don Rodrigo; and that by that time he must undoubtedly be gone. "Let us hope," concluded he, "that the Lord will have had mercy on him."

"This has nothing to do with us," said Don Abbondio. "Did I say no? Certainly I did not; but I speak . . . I speak for good reasons. Besides, don't you see, as long as a man has breath in his body . . . Only look at me: I'm somewhat sickly; I too have been nearer the other world than this: and yet I'm here; and . . . if troubles don't come upon me . . . why . . . I may hope to stay here a little longer yet. Think, too, of some people's constitutions. But, as I say, this has nothing to do with us."

After a little further conversation neither more nor less conclusive, Renzo made an elegant bow, returned to his party, made his report of the interview, and concluded by saying: "I've come away, because I've had quite enough of it, and that I mightn't run the risk of losing my patience, and using bad words. Sometimes he seemed exactly like what he was that other time:



the very same hesitation, and the very same arguments : I'm sure, if it had lasted a little longer, he'd have returned to the charge with some words in Latin. I see there must be another delay : it would be better to do what he says at once, and go and get married where we're about to live."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said the widow : "I should like you to let us women go make the trial, and see whether we can't find rather a better way to manage him. By this means, too, I shall have the pleasure of knowing this man, whether he's just such as you describe him. After dinner I should like to go, not to assail him again too quickly. And now, Signor bridegroom, please to accompany us two in a little walk, while Agnese is so busily employed : I will act the part of Lucia's mother. I want very much to see these mountains, and this lake of which I've heard so much, rather more at large, for the little I've already seen of them seems to me a charmingly fine view."

Renzo escorted them first to the cottage of his hospitable friend, where they met with a hearty welcome ; and they made him promise that, not that day only, but, if he could, every day, he would join their party at dinner.

Having returned from their ramble, and dined, Renzo suddenly took his departure, without saying where he was going. The women waited a little while to confer together, and concert about the mode of assailing Don Abbondio ; and at length they set off to make the attack.

—Here they are, I declare,—said he to himself ; but he put on a pleasant face, and offered warm congratulations to Lucia, greetings to Agnese, and compliments to the stranger. He made them sit down ; then he entered upon the grand subject of the plague, and wanted to hear from Lucia how she had managed to get over it



in the midst of so many sorrows : the Lazzeretto afforded an opportunity of bringing her companion into conversation ; then, as was but fair, Don Abbondio talked about his share in the storm ; then followed great rejoicings with Agnese, that she had come forth unharmed. The conversation was carried to some length : from the very first moment the two elders were on the watch for a favourable opportunity of mentioning the essential point ; and at length one of the two, I am not sure which, succeeded in breaking the ice. But what think you ? Don Abbondio could not hear with that ear. He took care not to say no, but behold ! he again recurred to his usual evasions, circumlocutions, and hoppings from bush to bush. " It would be necessary," he said, " to get rid of that order for Renzo's arrest. You, Signora, who come from Milan, will know more or less the course these matters take ; you would claim protection—some cavalier of weight : for with such means every wound may be cured. If then we may jump to the conclusion, without perplexing ourselves with so many considerations ; as these young people, and our good Agnese here, already intend to expatriate themselves, (but I'm talking at random ; for one's country is wherever one is well off,) it seems to me that all may be accomplished there, where no proclamation interposes. I don't myself exactly see that this is the moment for the conclusion of this match, but I would wish it well concluded, and undisturbedly. To tell the truth : here, with this edict in force, to proclaim the name of Lorenzo Tramaglino from the altar, I couldn't do it with a quiet conscience : I too sincerely wish them well ; I should be afraid I were doing them an injury. You see, ma'am, and they too."

Here Agnese and the widow, each in their own way, broke in to combat these arguments : Don Abbondio reproduced them in another shape : it was a perpetual



recommencement: when lo, enter Renzo with a determined step, and tidings in his face.

"The Signor Marquis has arrived," said he.

"What does this mean? Arrived where?" asked Don Abbondio.

"He has arrived at his palace, which was once Don Rodrigo's; because this Signor Marquis is the heir by feoffment in trust, as they say; so that there's no longer any doubt. As for myself, I should be very glad of it, if I could hear that that poor man had died in peace. At any rate, I've said Paternosters for him hitherto; now I will say the *De profundis*. And this Signor Marquis is a very fine man."

"Certainly," said Don Abbondio, "I've heard him mentioned more than once as a really excellent Signor, a man of the old stamp. But is it positively true?..."

"Will you believe the sexton?"

"Why?"

"Because he's seen him with his own eyes. I've only been in the neighbourhood of the castle; and, to say the truth, I went there on purpose, thinking they must know something there. And several people told me about it. Afterwards, I met Ambrogio, who had just been up there, and had seen him, I say, take possession. Will you hear Ambrogio's testimony? I made him wait outside on purpose."

"Yes, let him come in," said Don Abbondio. Renzo went and called the sexton, who, after confirming every fact, adding fresh particulars, and dissipating every doubt, again went on his way.

"Ah! he's dead, then! he's really gone!" exclaimed Don Abbondio. "You see, my children, how Providence overtakes some people. You know what a grand thing this is! what a great relief to this poor country! for it was impossible to live with him here. This pestilence has been a great scourge, but it has also been



*a good broom* ; it has swept away some, from whom, my children, we could never have freed ourselves. Young,



blooming, and in full vigour, we might have said that they who were destined to assist at their funeral, were still writing Latin exercises at school ; and in the twinkling of an eye they've disappeared, by hundreds at a time. We shall no longer see him going about with those cut-throat looking fellows at his heels, with such an ostentatious and supercilious air, looking as if he had swallowed a ramrod, and staring at people as if they were all placed in the world to be honoured by his condescension. Well, he's here no longer, and we are. He'll never again send such messages to honest men. He's given us all a great deal of disquietude, you see ; for now we may venture to say so."

" I've forgiven him from my heart," said Renzo.

" And you do right ! it's your duty to do so," replied Don Abbondio ; " but one may thank Heaven, I suppose, who has delivered us from him. But to return to ourselves ; I repeat, do what you like best. If you wish me to marry you, here I am : if it will be more convenient to you to go elsewhere, do so. As to the



order of arrest, I likewise think that, as there is now no longer any one who keeps his eye on you, and wishes to do you harm, it isn't worth giving yourself any great uneasiness about it; particularly as this gracious decree, on occasion of the birth of the most serene Infanta, is interposed. And then the plague! the plague! Oh, that plague has put to flight many a grand thing! So that, if you like . . . to-day is Thursday . . . on Sunday I'll ask you in church; because what may have been done in that way before will count for nothing, after so long an interval; and then I shall have the pleasure of marrying you myself."

"You know we came about this very thing," said Renzo.

"Very well; I shall attend you: and I must also write immediately and inform his Eminence."

"Who is his Eminence?"

"His Eminence," replied Don Abbondio, "is our Signor Cardinal the Archbishop, whom may God preserve!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," answered Agnese; "but, though I'm a poor ignorant creature, I can assure you he's not called so; because, the second time we were about to speak to him, just as I'm speaking to you, sir, one of the priests drew me aside, and instructed me how to behave to a gentleman like him; and that he ought to be called, your illustrious Lordship, and, my Lord."

"And now, if he had to repeat his instructions, he'd tell you that he is to have the title of Eminence: do you understand now? Because the Pope, whom may God likewise preserve, has ordered, ever since the month of June, that Cardinals are to have this title. And why do you think he has come to this resolution? because the word illustrious, which once belonged to them and certain princes, has now become,—even you know what, and to how many it is given; and how willingly they



swallow it! And what would you have done? Take it away from all? Then we should have complaints, hatred, troubles, and jealousies without end, and after all, they would go on just as before. So the Pope has found a capital remedy. By degrees, however, they will begin to give the title of Eminence to Bishops; then Abbots will claim it; then Provosts; for men are made so: they must always be advancing, always be advancing; then Canons . . . ."

"And Curates?" said the widow.

"No, no," pursued Don Abbondio, "the Curates must draw the cart: never fear that 'your Reverence' will sit ill upon Curates to the end of the world. Farther, I shouldn't be surprised if cavaliers, who are accustomed to hear themselves called Illustrious, and to be treated like Cardinals, should some day or other want the title of Eminence themselves. And if they want it, you know, depend upon it they'll find somebody to give it them. And then, whoever happens to be Pope then, will invent something else for the Cardinals. But come, let us return to our own affairs. On Sunday, I'll ask you in church; and, meanwhile, what do you think I've thought of to serve you better? Meanwhile, we'll ask for a dispensation for the two other times. They must have plenty to do up at Court in giving dispensations, if things go on everywhere as they do here. I've already . . . one . . . two . . . three . . . for Sunday, without counting yourselves; and some others may occur yet. And then you'll see afterwards; the fire has caught, and there'll not be left one person single. Perpetua surely made a mistake to die now; for this was the time that even she would have found a purchaser. And I fancy, Signora, it will be the same at Milan."

"So it is, indeed; you may imagine it, when, in my parish only, last Sunday, there were fifty weddings."

"I said so; the world won't come to an end yet.



And you, Signora, has no *bumble-fly* begun to hover about you?"

"No, no; I don't think about such things, nor do I wish to."

"Oh yes, yes; for you will be the only single one. Even Agnese, you see—even Agnese . . ."

"Poh! you are inclined to be merry," said Agnese.

"I am, indeed; and I think, at length, it's time. We've passed through some rough days, haven't we, my young ones? Some rough ones we've passed indeed; and the few days we have yet to live, we may hope will be a little less melancholy. But, happy you, who, if no misfortunes happen, have still a little time left to talk over bygone sorrows! I, poor old man . . . villains may die; one may recover of the plague, but there is no help for old age; and, as they say, *senectus ipsa est morbus*."

"Now, then," said Renzo, "you may talk Latin as long as you like, it makes no difference to me."

"You're at it again with that Latin, are you? Well, well, I'll settle it with you: when you come before me with this little creature here, just to hear you pronounce certain little words in Latin, I'll say to you—You don't like Latin; good bye. Shall I?"

"Ah! but I know what I mean," replied Renzo; "it isn't at all that Latin there that frightens me—that is honest, sacred Latin, like that in the mass. And, besides, it is necessary there that you should read what is in the book. I'm talking of that knavish Latin, out of church, that comes upon one treacherously, in the very pith of a conversation. For example, now that we are here, and all is over, that Latin you went on pouring forth, just here in this corner, to give me to understand that you couldn't, and that other things were wanting, and I know not what besides; please now to translate it a little for me."



"Hold your tongue, you wicked fellow, hold your tongue; don't stir up these things; for if we were now to make up our accounts, I don't know which would be creditor. I've forgiven all; let us talk about it no longer; but you certainly played me some tricks. I don't wonder at you, because you're a downright young scoundrel; but fancy this creature, as quiet as a mouse, this little saint, whom one would have thought it a sin to suspect and guard against. But after all, I know who set her up to it, I know, I know." So saying, he pointed and waved towards Agnese the finger he had at first directed to Lucia; and it is impossible to describe the good-temper and pleasantry with which he made these reproaches. The tidings he had just heard had given him a freedom and a talkativeness to which he had long been a stranger; and we should still be far enough from a conclusion, if we were to relate all the rest of this conversation, which he continued to prolong, more than once detaining the party when on the point of starting, and afterwards stopping them again for a little while at the very street door, each time to make some jocose speech.

The day following, he received a visit as unexpected as it was gratifying, from the Signor Marquis we have mentioned; a person beyond the prime of manhood, whose countenance was, as it were, a seal to what report had said of him; open, benevolent, placid, humble, dignified, and with something that indicated a resigned sadness.

"I come," said he, "to bring you the compliments of the Cardinal Archbishop."

"Ah, what condescension of you both!"

"When I was about to take leave of that incomparable man, who is good enough to honour me with his friendship, he mentioned to me two young betrothed



persons of this parish, who have had to suffer on account of the unfortunate Don Rodrigo. His Lordship wishes to have some tidings of them. Are they living? and are their affairs settled?"

"Every thing is settled. Indeed, I was intending to write about them to his Eminence; but now that I have the honour . . . ."

"Are they here?"

"They are; and they will be man and wife as soon as possible."

"And I request you to be good enough to tell me if I can be of any service to them, and also to instruct me in the best way of being so. During this calamity, I have lost the only two sons I had, and their mother, and have received three considerable inheritances. I had a superfluity even before; so that you see it is really rendering me a service to give me an opportunity of employing some of my wealth, and particularly such an opportunity as this."

"May Heaven bless you! Why are not all . . . . Enough; I thank you most heartily, in the name of these my children. And since your illustrious Lordship gives me so much encouragement, it is true, my Lord, that I have an expedient to suggest which perhaps may not displease your Lordship. Allow me to tell you, then, that these worthy people are resolved to go and settle themselves elsewhere, and to sell what little property they have here: the young man a vineyard of about nine or ten perches, if I'm not mistaken, but neglected and completely overgrown. Besides, he also has a cottage, and his bride another, now both, you will see, the abode of rats. A nobleman like your Lordship cannot know how the poor fare, when they are reduced to the necessity of disposing of their goods. It always ends by falling into the hands of some knave, who, if



occasion offers, will make love to the place for some time, and as soon as he finds that its owner wants to sell it, draws back, and pretends not to wish for it; so that he is obliged to run after him, and give it him for a piece of bread; particularly, too, in such circumstances as these. My Lord Marquis will already have seen the drift of my remarks. The best charity your most illustrious Lordship can afford to these people is, to relieve them from this difficulty by purchasing their little property. To say the truth, I have an eye to my own interest, my own advantage, in making this suggestion, the acquisition in my parish of a fellow-ruler like my Lord Marquis; but your Lordship will decide according to your own judgment; I have only spoken from obedience."

The Marquis highly commended the suggestion, returned thanks for it, begged Don Abbondio to be the judge of the price, and to charge it exorbitantly, and completed the Curate's amazement by proposing to go together immediately to the bride's house, where they should probably also find the bridegroom.

By the way, Don Abbondio, in high glee, as may be imagined, thought of and mentioned another proposal. "Since your illustrious Lordship is so inclined to benefit these poor people, there is another service which you might render them. The young man has an order of arrest out against him, a kind of sentence of outlawry, for some trifling fault he committed in Milan two years ago, on that day of the great insurrection, in which he chanced to be implicated, without any malicious intentions, indeed, quite ignorantly, like a mouse caught in a trap. Nothing serious, I assure you; mere boyish tricks, mischievous pranks; indeed, he is quite incapable of committing an actual crime. I may say so, for I baptized him, and have seen him grow up under my eyes.



Besides, if your Lordship would take any pleasure in it, as gentlemen sometimes do in hearing these poor people's rude language, you can make him relate the account himself, and you will hear. At present, as it refers to old matters, no one gives him any molestation; and, as I have said, he thinks of leaving the state; but in the course of time, or in case of returning here, or going elsewhere, some time or other, you will agree with me that it is always better to find oneself clear. My Lord Marquis has influence in Milan, as is just, both as a noble cavalier, and as the great man he really is . . . . No, no, allow me to say it, for truth will have its way. A recommendation, a word from a person like yourself is more than is necessary to obtain a ready acquittal."

"Are there not heavy charges against this young man?"

"Pshaw, pshaw! I would not believe them. They made a great stir about it at the moment; but I don't think there's anything now beyond the mere formalities."

"If so, the thing will be easy; and I willingly take it upon me."

"And yet you will not let it be said that you are a great man. I say it, and I will say it; in spite of your Lordship, I will say it. And even if I were to be silent, it would be to no purpose, because everybody says so: and *vox populi, vox Dei*."

They found Renzo and the three women together, as they expected. How these felt we leave the reader to imagine; but for my part, I think that the very rough and bare walls, and the windows, and the tables, and the kitchen utensils, must have marvelled at receiving among them so extraordinary a guest. He encouraged the conversation, by talking of the Cardinal and their



other matters with unreserved cordiality, and at the same time, with great delicacy. By and by he came to the proposal. Don Abbondio, being requested by him to name the price, came forward; and, after a few gestures and apologies,—that it wasn't in his line, and that he could only guess at random, and that he spoke out of obedience, and that he left it to him, mentioned what he thought a most extravagant sum. The purchaser said that, for his part, he was extremely well satisfied, and as if he had misunderstood, repeated double the amount. He would not hear of rectifying the mistake, and cut short and concluded all further conversation, by inviting the party to dinner at his palace the day after the wedding, when the deeds should be properly drawn out.

—Ah!—said Don Abbondio afterwards to himself, when he had returned home:—if the plague did things in this way always and everywhere, it would really be a sin to speak ill of it: we might almost wish for one every generation; and be content that people should be in league to produce a malady.—

The dispensation arrived, the acquittal arrived, that blessed day arrived: the bride and bridegroom went in triumphal security to that very church, where, with Don Abbondio's own mouth, they were declared man and wife. Another, and far more singular triumph, was the going next day to the palace; and I leave my readers to conjecture the thoughts which must have passed through their minds on ascending that acclivity, on entering that doorway; and the observations that each must have made, according to his or her natural disposition. I will only mention that, in the midst of their rejoicing, one or other more than once made the remark, that poor Father Cristoforo was still wanting to complete their happiness. "Yet, for him,



self," added they, "he is assuredly better off than we are."

The nobleman received them with great kindness, conducted them into a fine large servants'-hall, and seated the bride and bridegroom at table with Agnese and their Milanese friend; and before withdrawing to dine elsewhere with Don Abbondio, wished to assist a little at this first banquet, and even helped to wait upon them. I hope it will enter into no one's head to say that it would have been a more simple plan to have made at once but one table. I have described him as an excellent man, but not as an original, as it would now-a-days be called; I have said that he was humble, but not that he was a prodigy of humility. He possessed enough of this virtue to put himself beneath these good people, but not on an equality with them.

After the two dinners, the contract was drawn out by the hands of a lawyer, not, however, *Azzecca-Garbugli*. He, I mean his outward man, was, and still is, at Canterelli. And for those who are unacquainted with that neighbourhood, I suppose some explanation of this information is here necessary.

A little higher up than Lecco, perhaps half a mile or so, and almost on the confines of another country, named Castello, is a place called Canterelli, where two ways cross; and at one corner of the square space is seen an eminence, like an artificial hillock, with a cross on the summit. This is nothing else but a heap of the bodies of those who died in this contagion. Tradition, it is true, simply says, died of *the* contagion; but it must be *this* one, and none other, as it was the last and most destructive of which any memory remains. And we know that unassisted traditions always say too little by themselves.

They felt no inconvenience on their return, except that Renzo was rather incommoded by the weight



of the money he carried away with him. But, as the reader knows, he had had far greater troubles in his life than this. I say nothing of the disquiet of his mind, which was by no means trifling, in deciding upon the best means of employing it. To have seen the different projects that passed through that mind,—the fancies—the debates; to have heard the *pros* and *cons.* for agriculture or business, it was as if two academies of the last century had there met together. And the affair was to Renzo far more overwhelming and perplexing, because, since he was but a solitary individual, it could not be said to him,—Why need you choose at all? both one and the other, each in its own turn; for in substance they are the same; and, like one's legs, they are two things which go better together than one alone.

Nothing was now thought of, but packing up and setting off on their journey; the Tramaglino family to their new country, and the widow to Milan. The tears, the thanks, the promises of going to see each other, were many. Not less tender, even to tears, was the separation of Renzo and the family from his hospitable friend; nor let it be thought that matters went on coldly even with Don Abbondio. The three poor creatures had always preserved a certain respectful attachment to their curate; and he, in the bottom of his heart, had always wished them well. Such happy circumstances as these entangle the affections.

Should any one ask if there was no grief felt in thus tearing themselves from their native country,—from their beloved mountains; it may be answered that there was: for sorrow, I venture to say, is mingled, more or less, with every thing. We must, however, believe that it was not very profound, since they might have spared themselves from it by remaining at home, now that the two great obstacles, Don Rodrigo and the order for



Renzo's apprehension, were both taken away. But all three had been for some time accustomed to look upon the country to which they were going as their own. Renzo had recommended it to the women, by telling them of the facilities which it afforded to artificers, and a hundred things about the fine way in which they could live there. Besides, they had all experienced some very bitter moments in that home upon which they were now turning their backs; and mournful recollections always end in spoiling to the mind the places which recall them. And if these should be its native home, there is, perhaps, in such recollections, something still more keen and poignant. Even an infant, says our manuscript, reclines willingly on his nurse's bosom, and seeks with confidence and avidity the breast which has hitherto sweetly nourished him; but if, in order to wean him, she tinctures it with wormwood, the babe withdraws the lip, then returns to try it once more, but at length, after all, refuses it — weeping, indeed, but still refusing it.

What, however, will the reader now say, on hearing that they had scarcely arrived, and settled themselves in their adopted country, before Renzo found there annoyances all prepared for him! Do you pity him? but so little serves to disturb a state of happiness! This is a short sketch of the matter.

The talk that had been there made about Lucia, for some time before her arrival; the knowledge that Renzo had suffered so much for her sake, and had always been constant and faithful; perhaps a word or two from some friend who was partial to him and all belonging to him, — had created a kind of curiosity to see the young girl, and a kind of expectation of seeing her very beautiful. Now we know what expectation is: imaginative, credulous, confident; afterwards, when the trial comes, difficult



to satisfy, disdainful; never finding what she had counted upon, because, in fact, she knew not her own mind; and pitilessly exacting severe payment for the loveliness so unmeaningly lavished on her object.

When this Lucia appeared, many who had perhaps thought that she must certainly have golden locks, and cheeks blushing like the rose, and a pair of eyes one more beautiful than the other, and what not besides? began to shrug their shoulders, turn up their noses, and say, "Is this she? After such a time, after so much talk, one expected something better! What is she, after all? A peasant, like hundreds more. Why, there are plenty everywhere as good as she is, and far better too." Then, descending to particulars, one remarked one defect, and another, another; nor were there wanting some who considered her perfectly ugly.

As, however, no one thought of telling Renzo these things to his face, so far there was no great harm done. They who really did harm, they who widened the breach, were some persons who reported them to him: and Renzo—what else could be expected?—took them very much to heart. He began to muse upon them, and to make them matters of discussion, both with those who talked to him on the subject, and more at length in his own mind.—What does it matter to you? And who told you to expect anything? did I ever talk to you about her? did I ever tell you she was beautiful? And when you asked me if she was, did I ever say anything in answer, but that she was a good girl? She's a peasant! Did I ever tell you that I would bring you here a princess? She displeases you! Don't look at her, then. You've some beautiful women: look at them.—

Only look how a trifle may sometimes suffice to decide a man's state for his whole life. Had Renzo been obliged to spend his in that neighbourhood, agreeably to his



first intentions, he would have got on but very badly. From being himself displeased, he had now become displeasing. He was on bad terms with everybody, because everybody might be one of Lucia's criticisers. Not that he actually offended against civility; but we know how many sly things may be done without transgressing the rules of common politeness: quite sufficient to give vent to one's spleen. There was something sardonic in his whole behaviour; he, too, found something to criticise in everything: if only there were two successive days of bad weather, he would immediately say, "Aye indeed, in this country!" In short, I may say, he was already only borne with by a certain number of persons, even by those who had at first wished him well; and in course of time, from one thing to another, he would have gone on till he had found himself, so to say, in a state of hostility with almost the whole population, without being able, probably, himself, to assign the primary cause, or ascertain the root from which such an evil had sprung.

But it might be said that the plague had undertaken to amend all Renzo's errors. That scourge had carried off the owner of another silk-mill, situated almost at the gates of Bergamo; and the heir, a dissolute young fellow, finding nothing in this edifice that could afford him any diversion, proposed, or rather was anxious, to dispose of it, even at half its value; but he wanted the money down upon the spot, that he might instantly expend it with unproductive prodigality. The matter having come to Bortolo's ears, he immediately went to see it: tried to treat about it: a more advantageous bargain could not have been hoped for; but that condition of ready money spoiled all, because his whole property, slowly made up out of his savings, was still far from reaching the required sum. Leaving the ques-



tion, therefore, still open, he returned in haste, communicated the affair to his cousin, and proposed to take it in partnership. So capital an agreement cut short all Renzo's economical dubitations, so that he quickly decided upon business, and complied with the proposal. They went together, and the bargain was concluded. When, then, the new owners came to live upon their own possessions, Lucia, who was here expected by no one, not only did not go thither subjected to criticisms, but, we may say, was not displeasing to anybody; and Renzo found out that it had been said by more than one, "Have you seen that pretty she-blockhead who has come hither?" The substantive was allowed to pass in the epithet.

And even from the annoyance he had experienced in the other country, he derived some useful instruction. Before that time he had been rather inconsiderate in criticising other people's wives, and all belonging to them. Now he understood that words make one impression in the mouth, and another in the ear; and he accustomed himself rather more to listen within to his own before uttering them.

We must not, however, suppose that he had no little vexations even here. Man, (says our anonymous author—and we already know, by experience, that he had rather a strange pleasure in drawing similes—but bear with it this once, for it is likely to be the last time,) man, so long as he is in this world, is like a sick person lying upon a bed more or less uncomfortable, who sees around him other beds nicely made to outward appearance, smooth, and level, and fancies that they must be most comfortable resting-places. He succeeds in making an exchange; but scarcely is he placed in another, before he begins, as he presses it down, to feel in one place a sharp point pricking him, in another a hard lump; in



short, we come to almost the same story over again. And for this reason, adds he, we ought to aim rather at doing well, than being well; and thus we should come, in the end, even to be better. This sketch, although somewhat parabolic, and in the style of the seventeenth century, is, in substance, true. However, (continues he again,) our good friends had no longer any sorrows and troubles of similar kind and severity to those we have related: their life was, from this time forward, one of the calmest, happiest, and most enviable of lives; so that, were I obliged to give an account of it, it would tire the reader to death. Business went on capitally. At the beginning, there was a little difficulty from the scarcity of workmen, and from the ill-conduct and pretensions of the few that still remained. Orders were published, which limited the price of labour: in spite of this help, things rallied again; because, after all, how could it be otherwise? Another rather more judicious order arrived from Venice—exemption, for ten years, from all charges, civil and personal, for foreigners who would come to reside in the State. To our friends, this was another advantage.

Before the first year of their marriage was completed, a beautiful little creature came to light; and, as if it had been made on purpose to give Renzo an early opportunity of fulfilling that magnanimous promise of his, it was a little girl. It may be believed that it was named Maria. Afterwards, in the course of time, came I know not how many others, of both sexes; and Agnese was busy enough in carrying them about, one after the other, calling them little rogues, and imprinting upon their faces hearty kisses, which left a white mark for ever so long afterwards. They were all very well inclined; and Renzo would have them all learn to read and write, saying, that since this amusement was



in fashion, they ought at least to take advantage of it.

The finest thing was to hear him relate his adventures: and he always finished by enumerating the great things he had learnt from them, for the better government of himself in future. "I've learnt," he would say, "not to meddle in disturbances: I've learnt not to make speeches in the street: I've learnt not to drink more than I want: I've learnt not to hold the knocker of a door in my hand, when crazy-headed people are about: and I've learnt not to buckle a little bell to my foot, before thinking of the consequences." And a hundred other things.

Lucia did not find fault with the doctrine itself, but she was not satisfied with it; it seemed to her, in a confused way, that something was still wanting to it. By dint of hearing the same song over and over again, and meditating on it every time, "And I," said she one day to her moralizer, "what ought I to have learnt? I did not go to look for troubles: it is they that came to look for me. Though you wouldn't say," added she, smiling sweetly, "that my error was in wishing you well, and promising myself to you."

Renzo at first was quite puzzled. After a long discussion and inquiry together, they concluded that troubles certainly often arise from occasion afforded by ourselves; but that the most cautious and blameless conduct cannot secure us from them; and that, when they come, whether by our own fault or not, confidence in God alleviates them, and makes them conducive to a better life. This conclusion, though come to by poor people, seemed to us so right and just, that we have resolved to put it here, as the moral of our whole story.

If this same story have given the reader any pleasure,



he must thank the anonymous author, and, in some measure, his reviser, for the gratification. But if, instead, we have only succeeded in wearying him, he may rest assured that we did not do so on purpose.









